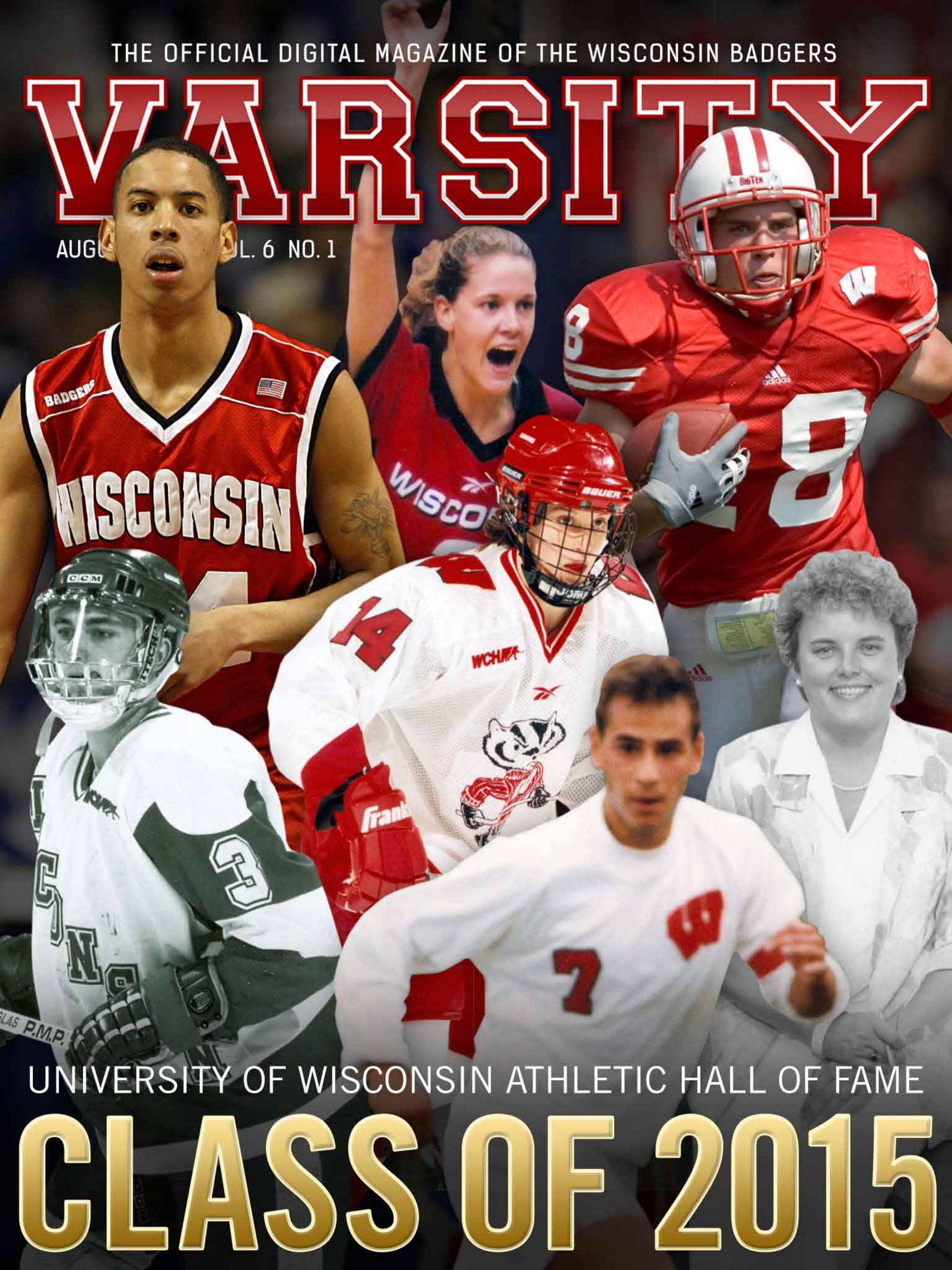


THE OFFICIAL DIGITAL MAGAZINE OF THE WISCONSIN BADGERS

WARSIITY

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UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN ATHLETIC HALL OF FAME

CLASS OF 2015



COVER STORY

ONE HALL OF A CLASS

The Wisconsin Athletics Hall of Fame Class of 2015 features national champions, All-Americans and a trio who have made their mark in the NFL, NBA and NHL.



DAVID STLUKA

LUCAS AT LARGE

CALL TO THE HALL

One of the best parts of Barry Alvarez's job as Director of Athletics is making the call to the latest inductees into UW's Hall of Fame.

COREY CLEMENT

TIME TO SHINE

After witnessing Melvin Gordon's remarkable 2014 season up close, junior RB Corey Clement is more than prepared to step into the spotlight.



DAVID STLUKA

FEATURES

IN [FOCUS]

The week's best photos

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BADGERING

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INSIDE FOOTBALL

Clement steps into spotlight

-SCROLL FOR MORE-

VARSIITY

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Hall of Fame call is special for Alvarez

The Call. It's one of the more unsung perks for athletic director Barry Alvarez. This year, Lizzy Fitzgerald, Mike Gentile, Devin Harris, Jim Leonhard, Brain Rafalski, Kerry Weiland and Paula Bonner were on the call list notifying them of their induction into the Wisconsin Athletics Hall of Fame.

Alvarez was the caller. "It's always fun to hear their responses when you tell them," he said. "You do have a lot of different reactions. But for the most part they're always really excited and very grateful for the recognition. We have a very strong class this year."

The Class of 2015 is also made up of strong personalities. Gentile, Leonhard and Rafalski had to answer questions about their physical stature and prove that they were big enough to succeed in their respective sports because they didn't have the "measurables." All three went on to play professionally.

The proof was in the DNA for Fitzgerald. Her father was a baseball and basketball player at Tulane and is a member of that school's Hall of Fame. One brother played basketball at Ole Miss, another played baseball at Tennessee and a sister played volleyball at Florida and later became a coach.

Weiland and Bonner were pioneers; the former in women's hockey, the latter in women's in-

tercollegiate athletics. Harris was a survivor. Before he got to Wisconsin, he ruptured his spleen after falling on a basketball at a summer camp. Soon after, he had emergency surgery to remove the spleen.

Harris was told that he was lucky to be alive. That was more than enough motivation to carry him into his senior year of high school. Up until then, he had not really tapped into his athletic potential; certainly not on the AAU circuit. But he put in extra work and turned himself into the Player of the Year.

ALVAREZ:

"IT'S REALLY IMPORTANT FOR US TO STAY IN TOUCH WITH OUR HISTORY AND TO CELEBRATE THOSE PEOPLE WHO HAVE CONTRIBUTED SO MUCH TO OUR TRADITION AND WHAT WE'RE ALL ABOUT."

Harris had another reality check as a UW freshman when his AAU teammate, longtime friend and roommate Latrell Fleming collapsed while running the Elver Park hill during pre-season conditioning. Fleming was diagnosed with hypertrophic cardiomyopathy and had to give up basketball.

Harris learned never to take anything for granted; a lesson that all of these Hall of Famers practiced during their celebrated

UW careers, a point that resonated with Alvarez during the selection process. "Each one of them has a very unique and compelling story to tell," Alvarez said.

None hit closer to home for Alvarez than Leonard's narrative. "I didn't know anything about Jimmy until he showed up at our summer football camp," said Alvarez, adding that 5-8 wishbone quarterbacks usually aren't very marketable. "There was a reason why we didn't initially recruit him.

"So we really didn't know anything about his athleticism and competitiveness until we had him in camp. I remember him running the 40 (4.4 over 40 yards) — he was fast and impressive in every drill. After we saw all the things that he could do, we definitely encouraged him to walk on."

As a freshman, it didn't take long for Leonhard to turn heads in the UW's preseason camp. "It's hard for a guy to jump out at you that soon in practice," Alvarez said. "But he was so active; he made things happen. The more you watched him, the more you appreciated him, the more you trusted him."

Alvarez remembered an exchange with his secondary coach. "We weren't in camp many days and I was watching Jimmy," he said, "and I told him, 'Get that little guy (Leonhard) over here with the ones and twos.' He looked at me dumb-



founded and says, ‘What? What do you mean?’

“I said, ‘Aren’t you watching practice? That guy is around the ball all the time. He’s touching the ball, he’s tipping the ball, and he’s intercepting the ball. Get him down here (with the starters and backups). That guy is effective. That guy can play.’”

Leonhard proved Alvarez’s point conclusively with the Badgers and for 10 years in the NFL. Last week, Leonhard’s name came up in conversation when Alvarez was visiting with his football coach Paul Chryst, who still has many connections in the league from his days with the San Diego Chargers.

“Paul was talking about Jimmy’s reputation and how much

respect that NFL people still have for him,” Alvarez said. “In fact, there are people talking to him now. I know that he wanted to retire but I’d be shocked if he doesn’t end up on a roster this year. He’s working out just in case.”

There’s no doubt in Alvarez’s mind that Leonhard could still have a positive impact on a pro defense largely because of his instincts and smarts. “When he was playing with the Jets,” he said, “they used to introduce him as the ‘Quarterback of the Defense.’ He’s a coach on the field.”

Besides the obvious Leonhard connection, Alvarez has another link to the 2015 Hall of Fame class. Lizzy Fitzgerald’s husband

is Kevin Stemke, an All-American punter for Alvarez in the late ‘90s. Stemke, 36, a Green Bay native, still owns the school record for punting average (43.5).

“He was one of my favorite guys. He was just so personable and outgoing and besides all of that, he was a helluva kicker,” said Alvarez, who was not known for his love of kicking specialists. “He was consistent, he had a great head on his shoulders and he was a good locker room guy.”

That’s code for team-oriented. Each of these Hall of Famers fall into that category, including Bonner. “I’m at a lot of functions with the Alumni Association,” Alvarez said, “and Paula gets our people excited — you can read the enthusiasm and love for the university through her excitement.”

Broach the topic of the Hall of Fame and nobody is more enthusiastic than Alvarez. “It’s really important for us to stay in touch with our history,” he emphasized, “and to celebrate those people who have contributed so much to our tradition and what we’re all about.

“In taking a couple of days to recognize them,” he said of the induction ceremony on Sept. 11 and their appearance the following day at the home opener at Camp Randall, “we’re teaching our current athletes about them and allowing our fans to celebrate their success. It’s healthy to do that.” For all involved. ■

WHAT WAS THE BEST THING YOU DID THIS SUMMER?



DREW CONNER

Senior • Men's Soccer

"I'd probably have to say my training stint in Sweden while I was playing with Ängelholm. It was my first time traveling to Europe and it was great to experience a new culture. On the way back home I had to fly out of Copenhagen, Denmark, where I was able to meet up with my teammate Anders Kristensen and get my sunglasses back that he stole from me."



TAYLOR MOREY

Senior • Volleyball

"This summer I had the opportunity to travel to China with the United States Collegiate National Team. It was a trip of a lifetime! We competed against the professional teams in Beijing and toured the city. We saw The Great Wall of China, The Forbidden City, and The Temple of Heaven. I had an absolute blast!"

Tap to see photo »



DARIUS HILLARY

Senior • Football

"This summer, Michael Caputo, Tyler Marz, Vince Biegel and I all did summer internships at Merrill-Lynch with the program that they have with student-athletes every summer. I'm a marketing major but learning about the finance side was very interesting. We learned about the stock market, how to manage your money and all the affairs going on outside of the country. Going in there Monday through Thursday for six hours a day was really fun."



KYLIE SCHWARZ

Junior • Women's Soccer

"I went to Keystone, Colorado this summer for a little vacation. I went white-water rafting, fly fishing, a concert at Red Rocks, climbing, and mountain biking. This was my favorite memory from summer because I got to spend time doing the things I love with my dad in one of most beautiful places in the mountains."



DAVID STLUKA

MICHAEL WEISS

MEN'S SWIMMING

Former Badger swimmer **Michael Weiss** represented the United States this past week at the 2015 FINA World Championships in Kazan, Russia. The second-largest event in swimming next to only the Olympics, Weiss helped the USA claim a silver medal in the 800-meter freestyle relay. He teamed with Ryan Lochte, Conor Dwyer and Reed Malone to combine for a time of 7:04.75.

Weiss also competed for the U.S. earlier this summer at the 2015 Pan American Games in Toronto, where he claimed four medals. The Reno, Nevada native won silver medals in the 400 Medley Relay and 800 Freestyle Relay, plus bronze medals in the 200 Freestyle and 400 Freestyle Relay.

Weiss turns his focus next to training and preparing for the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio de Janeiro.

How were the Pan American Games? How did it help prepare you for the World Championships?

"The Pan American Games were a great experience for me to compete internationally at a high level. I had a lot of ups and downs in my own swimming, but that helped me prepare both mentally and physically for the bigger stage here at World Championships."

What was the experience like at the World Championships and swimming the anchor leg of a relay?

"It was a great learning experience. Standing behind the blocks and watching for the first three legs was exciting. To then anchor it was an absolute honor. The pressure was just building and building as I watched behind the block. I've had pressure

ALL ABOUT MICHAEL

University of Wisconsin, 2013

Hometown: Reno, Nevada

Event at UW: Free/Back/IM

UW Highlights: NCAA All-American in 2011-12 & 2012-13 (2x)

QUICK Qs FOR MICHAEL

Future professional aspirations?

"Sports Marketing."

Age you started swimming?

"Age 3, because I nearly drown in a hot tub while my mom was coaching. She decided it was a good idea to start swimming lessons."

Hobbies outside the pool?

"Going to the zoo, cooking and buying products off of infomercials."

Favorite athlete?

"Russell Wilson."

Goals for the rest of the year?

"My goal is to go out there and give it all I got to set myself up for the Olympic year next year. I want to bring home a medal for the USA and the Badgers!"

SCROLL



LIZZY
STEMKE

Lizzy Stemke chuckled at the recollection of her freshman orientation at Wisconsin.

“My mindset in my first couple of weeks,” she said, “was to put one foot in front of the other.”

Nothing more, nothing less for the New Orleans native.

“Coming from Louisiana,” she said, “I was in a whole other world in Madison, Wisconsin.”

Stemke took that giant cultural leap because of volleyball. Recruited by former UW coach John Cook, she was a prep All-American and regarded as one of the top setters in the nation. Stemke picked the Badgers over Florida, UCLA and Colorado.

“I felt like Wisconsin was going to be a place,” she observed, “where I would be able to expand and grow as a player, person and leader.”

While owning up to some early anxiety — “My first year I was just trying to survive as a small fish in a large pond” — she was still convinced that she was in the right place at the right time.

“I was in a special place,” she recalled, “where goals of winning the Big Ten and going to the national championship were something that could happen here.”

In retrospect, she noted, “It was the launching pad for the rest of my life.”

Nonetheless, she couldn’t help but chuckle at the memory of those early days.

“I was a clueless freshman,” she said.

Adhering to the time-honored cliché/truth that it’s not how you start but how you finish, she might want to share the narrative, if she hasn’t already, with her University of Georgia volleyball team because eventually it did all fall into place for Lizzy Stemke, nee Lizzy Fitzgerald.

As a three-year starter and two-time All-American, she helped lead the Badgers to a 112-23 record, two Big Ten titles and a runner-up finish in the 2000 NCAA tournament. She left with an impeccable resume and now she’s coming back to enter the Wisconsin Athletics Hall of Fame.

Now how’s this for timing? The induction ceremony will coincide with Georgia’s appearance in Madison for the Badger Classic at the UW Field House in September. It was no coincidence, either, that the Bulldogs are part of a field that includes Georgetown and Kent State.



STEMKE ON MADISON:

“I WAS IN A SPECIAL PLACE WHERE GOALS OF WINNING THE BIG TEN AND GOING TO THE NATIONAL CHAMPIONSHIP WERE SOMETHING THAT COULD HAPPEN HERE.”

“My hat’s off to Kelly and Coach Alvarez,” she said of UW volleyball coach Kelly Sheffield and athletic director Barry Alvarez, “for making it happen. What an incredibly special weekend it’s going to be combining my two, totally separate lives. My time as a player seems like 100 years ago.”

On the other hand, she’s already entering her fifth season as Georgia’s head coach. “It absolutely flies,” she said. “Some days, I feel like I got the job yesterday. Some days, I feel like I’ve been doing this for 30 years. It all goes by in a flash.”

Georgia will play Wisconsin on Thursday night and Georgetown on Friday afternoon.

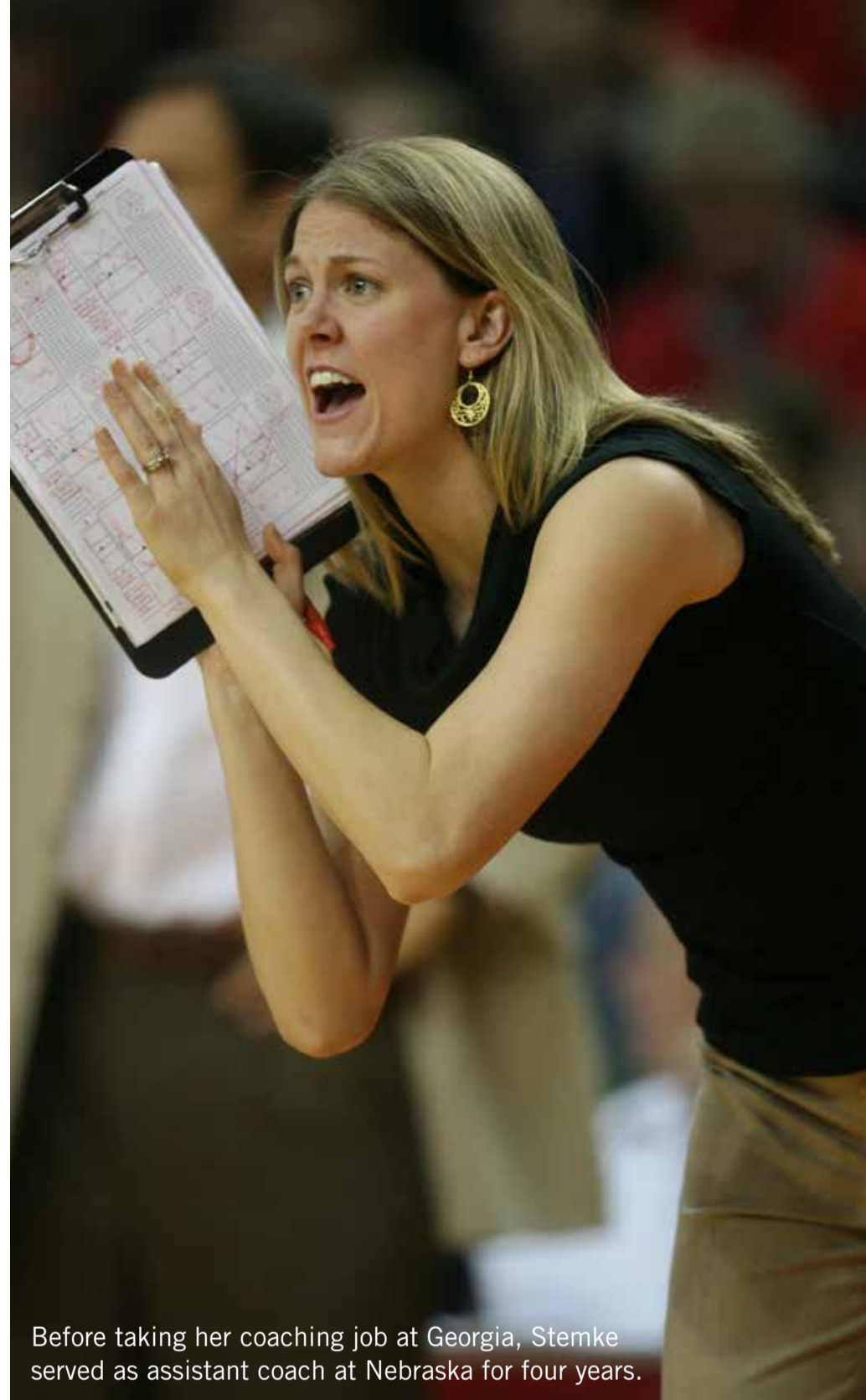
Meanwhile, the Hall of Fame induction ceremony will be Friday night. And there will be a large contingent supporting Stemke, including her parents and husband, Kevin Stemke, an All-American punter for the Badgers and the inaugural winner of the Ray Guy Award in 2000.

“I really haven’t talked much about it with my (Georgia) team,” she said. “Sure, they’re going to my alma mater but I really don’t want it to be all about that. It’s a weekend for them to get some great competition and to play some important preseason matches. It’s an interesting dynamic. You want to keep your team focused and excited about playing, so that’s where the focus has been.

“We’ll definitely have our work cut out for us (against Wisconsin) in knowing they’ve got terrific talent coming back and terrific talent coming in and great leadership at the helm (Sheffield). No doubt, it will be some high-level volleyball. As we’re preparing our team, that’s what we’re talking about.”

With the loss of four starters and addition of seven freshmen, the Bulldogs will be young.

“We’ll be young and very athletic,” Stemke said. “We have a lot of winners in this program; a lot of kids who have been winning at a pretty high level



Before taking her coaching job at Georgia, Stemke served as assistant coach at Nebraska for four years.

with their high school or club teams. They’ll be just eager enough but I don’t think they’ll be fazed by Wisconsin’s reputation and success.

“It will be a very eye-opening match for them right out of the gate to help prepare us for the SEC schedule. We’re excited about the potential of this group and we’ll be working to find our stride.”

Stemke hit her potential midway through her Wisconsin career. “I struggled with confidence as a sophomore,” she confided. “And it was not until my junior year that I felt like I was going to be able to contribute to some really special things.”

But she had to earn everything because of sophomore setter Morgan Shields, who pushed her competitively for playing time and made her better. In late September of 2000, Stemke was recognized as



The team sings 'Varsity' after sweeping USC in the 2000 NCAA national semifinals.

the Big Ten and national player of the week after sparking sweeps of Penn State and Indiana.

That was a first in program history. No other setter had accomplished that feat, not Laura Abbinante, Collen Neels or Liz Tortorello, a Who's Who prior to the emergence of Stemke, who played one season for Cook before his departure to Nebraska and finished her career under Pete Waite.

"We were a team of fighters my junior year," Stemke said. "I can still remember the Elite Eight match against UCLA in the Field House; the place was literally shaking. A number of us had gotten the flu the week before. I was getting an IV the Sunday prior to the match. A few of us were sick as dogs. It was the most incredible team effort I've ever been part of —just getting to the final four."

In front of 4,946 boisterous fans, the Badgers made

a statement with their thrilling 15-7, 7-15, 16-14, 14-16, 15-12 victory over UCLA in the 2000 NCAA Midwest Regional Final at the UW Field House. Despite losing senior middle blocker Meggan Kohlen with an ankle injury midway through the fourth game, they put away the Bruins and earned the program's first trip to the national semifinals.



I THINK WE PROVED TO EVERYONE AROUND THE NATION WHAT WE'RE ABOUT AND WE SET THE STANDARD NOW (FOR FUTURE UW TEAMS).

"We were complete underdogs," Stemke still remembered vividly, "and everyone thought we would be slaughtered by USC in the semifinals and we did a complete role re-

versal and swept in three."

Sherisa Livingston and Jenny Maastricht combined for 41 of Wisconsin's 60 kills in a 15-10, 15-9, 15-9 sweep of Southern Cal at the Richmond (Va.) Coliseum. The next challenge for the Badgers, who played most of the USC match without an injured Claudia Rodriguez, was unbeaten Nebraska, coached by the

aforementioned John Cook.

In the end, the Huskers had too much firepower and capped a 34-0 season with a hard-fought 15-9, 9-15, 7-15, 15-2, 15-9 victory over the pesky Badgers. Afterwards, Stemke said, “I think we proved to everyone around the nation what we’re about and we set the standard now (for future UW teams).”

She was spot-on with her analysis. Addressing the lessons that were learned during that memorable run and beyond, Stemke said, “It shaped everything in terms of what it means to be a team and how you battle through adversity and how you learn to lean each other as teammates.”

Stemke continued to play volleyball for a few seasons after graduation. “I wanted to play for as long as I felt that I had it in me — I loved it,” she said. “It wasn’t until a couple of years out of college — Kevin and I were both playing professionally at the time — when I thought, ‘Ok, what’s next?’”

The answer was coaching. After the first week, the first taste, she was hooked.

“I thought, ‘Gosh, this is for me, this is what I want to do,’” Stemke said.

After paying her dues, the springboard to the Georgia job was a four-year stint as an assistant under Cook at Nebraska. “He certainly has had an enormous impact — being a player for him and also having the unique opportunity to coach with him — in all facets of my career,” she said.

Cook was not the only positive influence from her formative years at Wisconsin. Stemke has reconnected with Waite and still stays in touch with Iowa State head coach Christy Johnson and Arkansas head coach Robert Pulliza. Both were former

Badger assistant coaches.

“I’ve had great mentors,” Stemke said.

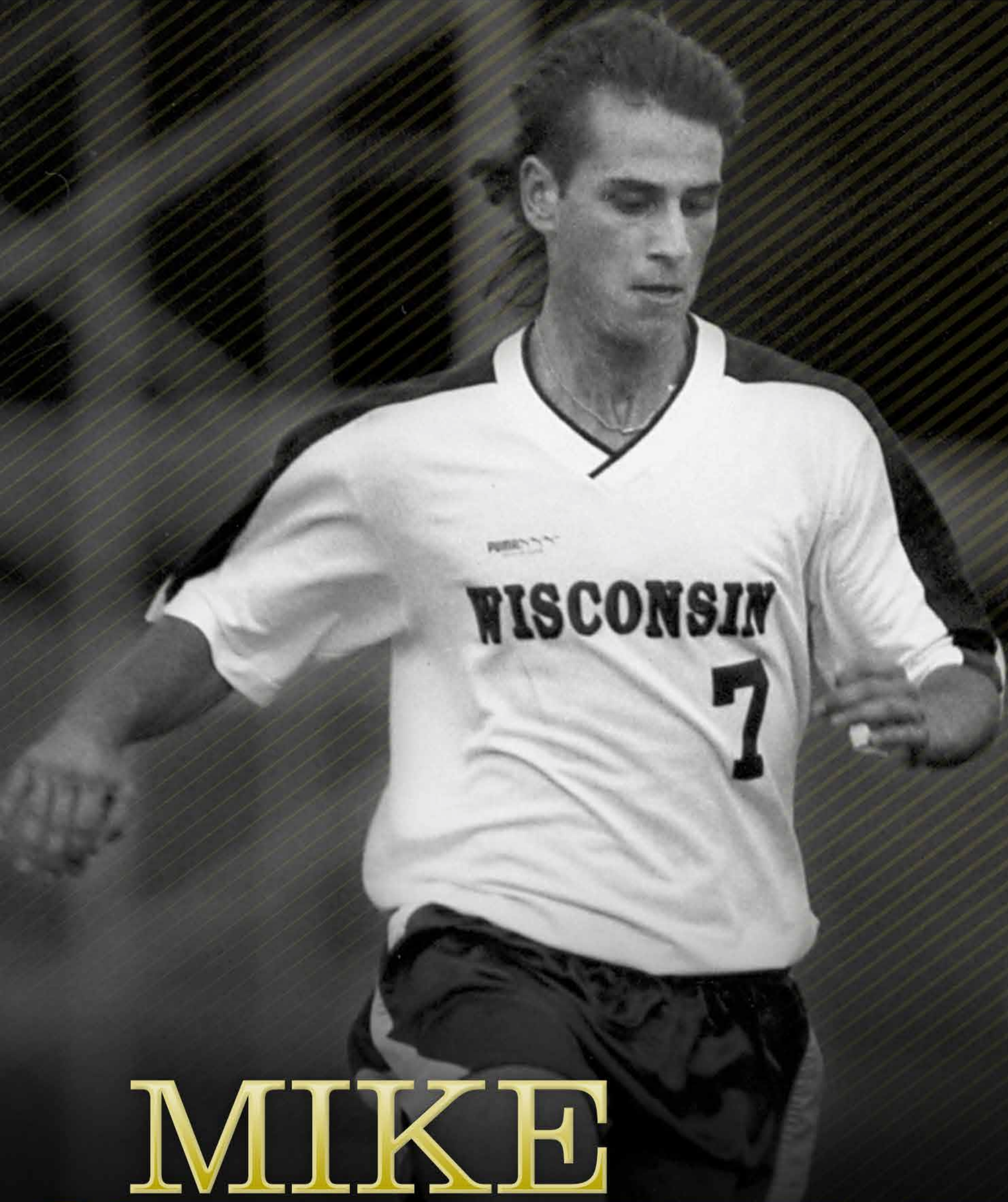
Her husband, Kevin Stemke, would also qualify as one.

“Oh, my gosh, he’s my stable ground,” she said. “He’s an unbelievable rock.”

Both are looking forward to their September homecoming.

“We’re very excited,” Lizzy Stemke said, “to combine the past with the present.” 





MIKE
GENTILE

Duke or Wisconsin? That was the crossroads for Mike Gentile at the end of the recruiting process. At one point, the 5-foot-10, 160-pound Gentile was leaning toward playing for the Blue Devils, maybe more of a sure thing to some in the college soccer world than the Badgers.

Gentile was a first-team prep All-American during his senior year at Churchill High School in Livonia, Michigan, a western suburb of Detroit. “In picking a college,” he said, “obviously the dream is to always go on and win a championship. I think that’s every kid’s dream to do that.”

Ultimately, he opted for Wisconsin. “I was excited about the (recruiting) class that we had coming in that freshman year,” he said of the Class of 1992. “I also knew Jeff Gold and some of the other players on the team. So I felt very comfortable being on a team that I was kind of familiar with.”

Because of his Michigan roots, he liked the “Mid-

west mentality” the Badgers offered. Beyond that, one of Gentile’s high school teammates, Scott Lamphear, also signed with Wisconsin, and so had one of his prep rivals from Livonia, Travis Roy from Stevenson High School, a Mr. Soccer his senior year.

When the UW athletic department cut five sports in 1991, the result of a budget crisis, men’s soccer was a beneficiary — jumping from 2.2 scholarships to 9.9 overall. Head coach Jim Launder scored big in his first class with expanded recruiting resources by landing Gentile, Lamphear and Roy.

As seniors, they would become the core of an NCAA championship team.

Reflecting on the historic 1995 season, Gentile said, “We had all matured as college athletes and we had some really good young players. You can’t put it into words when something like that happens (winning a national title, the first in men’s soccer at Wisconsin).





WHEN YOU FINALLY REALIZE WHAT YOU'VE ACCOMPLISHED AND HOW MANY TEAMS IN THE NCAA ARE ALL VYING FOR THAT SPOT, THE FEELING IS JUST OVERWHELMING. IT REALLY DOESN'T SET IN WHAT YOU'VE DONE UNTIL A LITTLE BIT LATER. BUT IT WAS DEFINITELY ONE OF THE PROUDEST AND BEST MOMENTS OF MY CAREER.

“When you finally realize what you’ve accomplished and how many teams in the NCAA are all vying for that spot, the feeling is just overwhelming. It really doesn’t set in what you’ve done until a little bit later. But it was definitely one of the proudest and best moments of my career.”

Maybe it was fitting, too, at least for Gentile, who the Badgers beat in the championship game.

They beat Duke.

Not that he needed validation, because he felt like he made the right decision all along.

Now, twenty years later, Gentile will be inducted into the Wisconsin Athletics Hall of Fame.

“I thought I was being pranked when I got the call because I’ve been known to pull a prank or two on my friends,” said Gentile. “But I’m very honored with the caliber of athletes that are in there (HOF). I’m over the moon excited and appreciative and everything that goes along with it.”

That would also include taking part in a 20th anniversary reunion of the '95 Badgers that will be the centerpiece of a weekend featuring a Sept. 27 home match with Maryland. Gentile hasn’t been back to Madison since 1997. After graduation, he played seven years of professional soccer with the Milwaukee Rampage and Minnesota Thunder.

“I wasn’t able to make the last one (2005 reunion) so I’m excited to go back and see the campus and some of the old guys,” said Gentile, now living in a Minneapolis suburb. “My son is playing soccer now and my daughter played the last couple of years. It’s still in my blood. I still have a passion for it.”

Does it seem like two decades ago that he was the leading scorer on a national champion?

“In my mind, no,” Gentile said, “In my mind, I’ve got practice tomorrow.”



The Badgers slowly began to draw some regional attention in 1991 when they went 5-0 in the Big Ten and won the regular season title. In their first NCAA appearance in 10 years, they defeated Evansville before falling in a second round game to Indiana on the Hoosiers’ turf in Bloomington.

After failing to make the NCAA tournament in 1992, they put themselves on the national radar in 1993 by advancing to the Sweet 16 on the strength of wins over Notre Dame, 3-1, and top-seeded Indiana, 1-0. That was a shocker, though the Badgers lost 3-0 to eventual national champ Virginia.

In 1994, Launder knew that his team could no longer sneak up on opponents after reaching the quarterfinals. With 14 returning letterwinners and seven starters, he admitted as much. But the Badgers fell short of post-season expectations, losing a first-

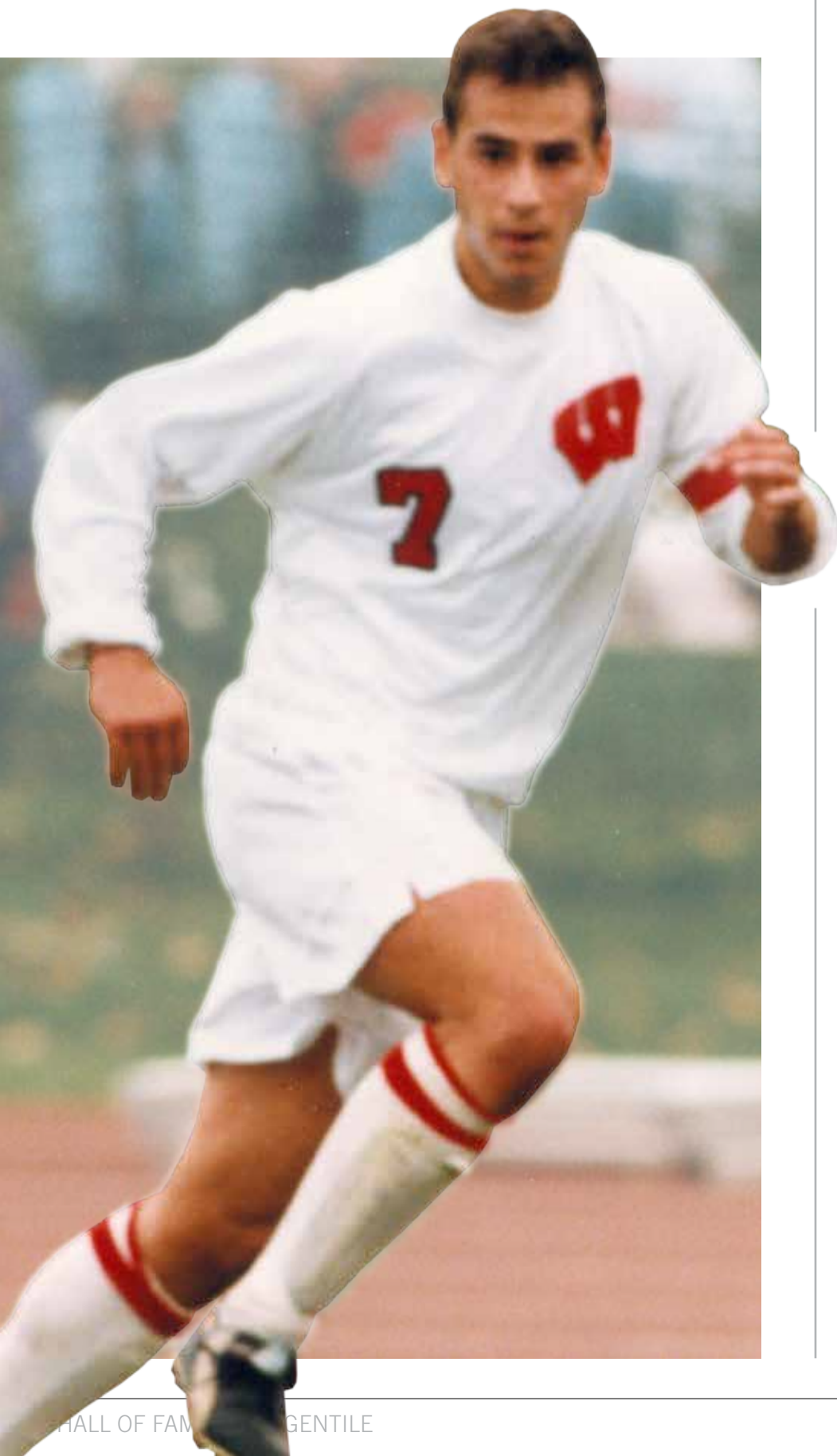


round NCAA game to SMU in Dallas.

That set the stage for 1995, especially since the Badgers were anchored by eight seniors and returned four of their top five scorers.

“We had a core group of players that played well together,” said Gentile. “Sometimes you can have the best players in the league on your team and it just doesn’t jell. That’s always the difficult part — finding a team that jells together and that’s what we were able to do.”

On their road to the title, the players had to deal with some regular season potholes. After knocking off No. 4 South Carolina, the Badgers vaulted from No. 17 to No. 9 in the Intercollegiate Soccer Association of America poll. But they turned around in their next game and lost to No. 18 Creighton.



That paled by comparison to a loss to unranked Butler which had followed impressive back-to-back victories over No. 12 Penn State and No. 16 Indiana. “You look at the losses,” Gentile said, “and you obviously want them back. But at the same time it lets you know that you’re beatable.”

As such, they served as wake-up calls and motivation.

“We had conversations with players during the season,” said Gentile, a two-year captain. “We talked about how we only have a few opportunities to get to where we want to be. Each game matters, each minute of each game matters, and you need to play it like it’s the last game of the season.”

The Badgers won the Big Ten regular-season crown with a 4-1 record. In a rain-shortened conference tournament, they were co-champs along with Indiana. Gentile, Roy and Shea Huston were named first-team All-Big Ten. Josh Provan, Alastair Steel and Lars Hanson were on the second team.

Lauder was Coach of the Year, an honor that he shared with his assistants, Ian Barker and Bill Reddan. “Me getting coach of the year is silly,” said Lauder, who was culminating his 14th season at Wisconsin (he was hired five years after its inception as a varsity sport). “It’s never one person.”

So what was Lauder’s impact on the ’95 team? “He was able to see the different pieces to the puzzle,” Gentile said. “And he was able to get the right people in the right places. It was always his goal to build a team with cohesion and he’d say, ‘My job is to keep you focused.’”

Wisconsin’s calling card was defense. After a late October loss to Michigan State, 2-1 in overtime, the Badgers didn’t lose again, nor did they give up a goal over the next seven games. They opened NCAA play on the heels of shutout wins over Notre Dame and the Spartans in the rematch.

“Once we hit the playoffs, it was one of those things where the chemistry was just right and it all fell into place,” said Gentile. “I always felt like we were a good team and we could play with anybody. But we were not going to lose in the playoffs. You can’t explain it. The chemistry was just there.”

The Badgers had to overcome a key injury, though. In a second-round playoff win over William & Mary, they lost their starting goalkeeper, Todd Wilson, to a dislocated elbow. Wilson was the best in the nation



with a 0.49 goals-against-average. He had recorded 17 wins and 13 shutouts.

Replacing Wilson was junior Jon Belskis, a former walk-on. In his only two previous career appearances, both during the '95 season, he didn't have to make a save. "We stepped up our game for sure," Gentile said. "But Jon did a great job as well stepping into a role where now he's the No. 1 guy."

Defense continued to carry the Badgers, who blanked SMU, 2-0, to advance to the Final Four in Richmond, Virginia. Since 1984, Indiana had been the only team from the Midwest to win an NCAA title. So most of the soccer pundits viewed Wisconsin as an outsider, if not a fluke, despite their shutout string.

"But the coaches do their homework and they knew, 'These guys are for real and they're here for a reason,'" suggested Gentile, a third-team All-American. "Maybe some people were saying, 'Who are these guys? Wisconsin really hasn't done a whole lot.' But we knew that we were a good team."

And the Badgers went out and proved how good

they truly were. In the national semifinals, they beat Portland, 1-0, on Hanson's goal. In the finals, they drew Duke, an upset winner over mighty Virginia, which had won the last four NCAA championships.


The Badgers didn't waste any time, either, taking a 1-0 lead on another Hanson goal in the 9th minute of the match. Chad Cole then scored his first goal of the season 17 minutes into the second half to seal the school's first national title.

A record-breaking crowd of 21,319 — the most ever to watch a college soccer game and more than UW had drawn (20,915) for all of their home games combined that season — watched the Badgers celebrate their seventh consecutive shutout.

"You need a solid defense," Gentile said. "That's the No. 1 priority any championship season."

In 25 games, the Badgers had 17 shutouts. They gave up only 11 goals all season.

"When you're tough to score on," added Gentile, "you're tough to beat."

You can't beat those memories. And Gentile will get a chance to relive them twice in September. 



BUT THE COACHES DO THEIR HOMEWORK AND THEY KNEW, 'THESE GUYS ARE FOR REAL AND THEY'RE HERE FOR A REASON.' 'MAYBE SOME PEOPLE WERE SAYING, 'WHO ARE THESE GUYS? WISCONSIN REALLY HASN'T DONE A WHOLE LOT.' BUT WE KNEW THAT WE WERE A GOOD TEAM.



DEVIN
HARRIS

Two weeks before Bo Ryan publicly revealed his retirement plans, Devin Harris had dinner with his former Wisconsin coach and point guard “prof.” Ryan didn’t directly come out and tell Harris that the 2015-16 season would be his final one. But it was what he didn’t say that tipped off Harris.

“I asked him how much longer he wanted to coach,” said Harris, one of the greatest players from the Ryan era even though he played only three seasons, “and he really didn’t give me a straight answer so I wasn’t that surprised. He’s going off on his own terms.”

Harris would like to be in that same position someday. After 11 eventful NBA seasons — which has seen him overcome injuries, cope with trades, make an All-Star team, get to the Finals, set a Guinness World Record and score 47 points in a road game — he’s not ready to walk away yet.

But if you’re wondering if he has exceeded his own expectations, yes, he has. Especially knowing that the average length of an NBA career is 4.8 years. “I’m working on 12 and I want to get to 15 at least,” said Harris, who’s signed through the 2016-17 season with the Dallas Mavericks.

Looking back on a pro journey which has included two tours of duty with the Mavs and stints with New Jersey, Utah and Atlanta, he conceded, “It has been kind of like a roller coaster. I got bounced around, I kind of got lost in the shuffle a little bit. But now I’m trying to get back to being relevant.”

How does one stay relevant and/or survive? “Experience and fearlessness — you just have to want it more than the other person,” Harris maintained. “It’s a job where you have new guys coming in every year who are gunning

for your job and your minutes. You have to want it more.”

There are obvious concessions to age, too. “My role on the team is a little different than it was earlier in my career,” admitted Harris, 32, who has started only three times the last two seasons (116 games) in Dallas. “Coming off the bench and impacting a game that way is a lot tougher than starting.”

To this end, Harris noted, “You have to try and match the intensity that is out there when you get out there. With no time to warm up, you have to be ready to go when you step on the floor. It’s a new challenge for me and I’m trying to excel at it.”

As a battle-tested NBA vet, who has encountered the inevitable highs and lows of the business, what advice would Harris give Frank Kaminsky and Sam Dekker, both of whom are embarking on their pro careers with Charlotte and Houston, respectively?

“I’ve watched Frank play Summer League and he looks like he’s going to be all right,” he said. “He has grown tremendously since his freshman year. I’d encourage him to keep working and getting better. Sam has an athletic game and body for the NBA. He has to keep improving on his weaknesses.”

Harris doesn’t anticipate that they will have any trouble learning how to carry themselves as professional athletes. “It’s all about upbringing and where you come from,” he said. “And they won’t have any problem in that aspect because Wisconsin does a great job of grooming its guys for that.”

Michael Finley comes to mind. So does Harris who left for the NBA following his junior season.

“It was tough leaving knowing what we had put together in those three years and knowing what I



DAVID STILUKA



LEARNING HOW TO DEAL WITH DIFFERENT TYPES OF PEOPLE AND THE STRUCTURE AND LEARNING HOW TO MULTI-TASK WITH SCHOOL AND BASKETBALL PREPARED ME FOR LATER IN LIFE.

was leaving behind,” said Harris, pointing out that the Badgers advanced to the 2005 Elite Eight where they were eliminated by the eventual national champion, North Carolina.

“I knew it was going to be a very good team and I thought I could have made it better by staying. I was having the time of my life — college was the best. Nobody really wants to grow up, nobody wants to be a grown-up. It was a tough decision to make but it was something I had to do.”

Harris acknowledged that he had some growing up to do when he arrived on the UW campus as “Mr. Basketball” in the state of Wisconsin. After setting scoring records during his senior year at Wauwatosa East, he had to adjust to a new offensive system, the Swing.

Harris had verbally committed to former Badger head coach Dick Bennett whose abrupt retirement (three games into the 2000 season) left Brad Soderberg in charge of the program in an interim capacity. Soderberg was not retained and Ryan was hired from UW-Milwaukee.

“When I first got there, it was a little bit of the unknown because I was playing for a coach that I really didn’t initially commit to,” Harris said. “I didn’t really know the style of play. But the ultimate goal was still to make it to where I am right now.

“I didn’t really know how I was going to get there or the route that I was going to take. But we did it together from Day One,” he said of his on-court basketball partnership and off-court friendship with Ryan “and we’ve been close ever since.”

Harris experienced steady growth under Ryan’s management style.

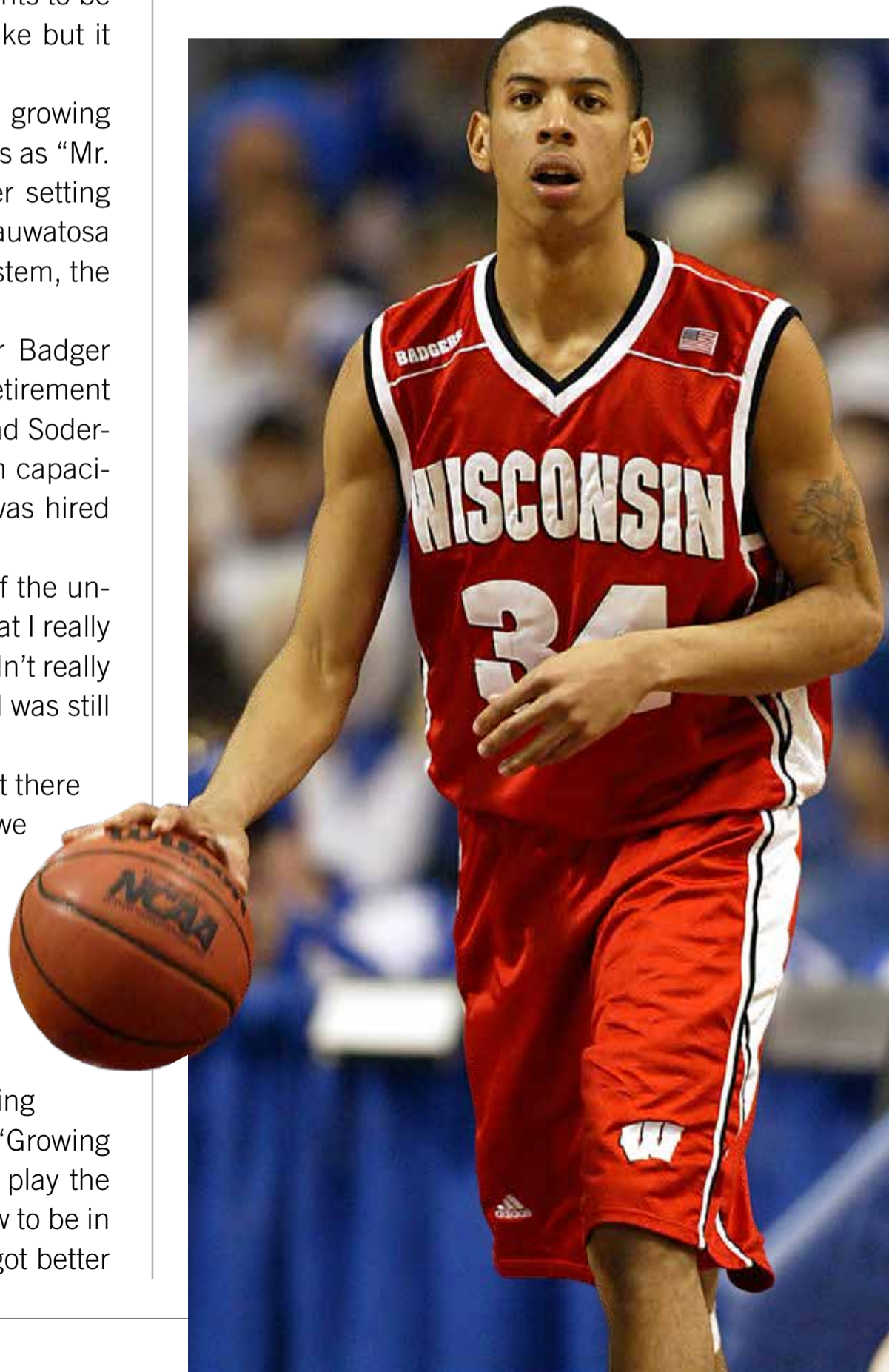
“When I came in, I was basically a shooting guard, a small shooting guard,” he said. “Growing under him (Ryan), I slowly learned how to play the point and how to command a game and how to be in charge out there on the floor. Every year, I got better

at it. He slowly brought me on.

“I backed up Travon (Davis) my freshman year, took on the (starting) job as a sophomore and continued to learn and really excel my junior year. It took some time and he (Ryan) was hard on me. But it was for the best. He always pointed me in the right direction.”

Harris reiterated the importance of “learning how to command” under Ryan’s guidance. “We worked on that through individual workouts and practices,” he said. “The thing about Bo is that he always brings in life experiences to help you understand the route that you need to take.”

If there was a turning point, according to Harris, it was Wisconsin’s loss to No. 1 seed Kentucky in the



▲ PHOTOS - Tap to pause/play ▪ Swipe to change

2003 Sweet 16. “Realistically, it was knowing that I could play at that level,” he said, “and our team could compete against that type of talent. Being in the game and having a chance to win was a confidence boost for everybody.”

The following season, Harris averaged 19.5 points and was honored as the Big Ten Player of the Year. “I put together a string of games in the middle of the season where everything was working for me in all aspects of the game,” Harris said. “I was just playing at an ultra-high level and I started to really believe that I could do this at the next level.”

Still, there was some culture shock when Harris broke in as an NBA rookie. “It’s a pretty big jump to the speed of the game,” he said. “You’re used to seeing one or two guys with that type of talent on a college team. When you go to the NBA, it’s everybody; it’s one through 15 on the roster. My first year was bit of a rocky one but I learned a lot.”

Year 2 in Dallas (2005-06) was memorable. Harris averaged 10 points and three assists and the Mavericks got to the NBA finals (where they were beaten by Miami). Year 2 in New Jersey (2008-09) was

even more memorable. Harris averaged 21 points and seven assists and was named to the All-Star team.

As part of the All-Star festivities, Harris dribbled a basketball from baseline to baseline in 3.9 seconds, a Guinness world record. That same season he scored 47 points at Phoenix. There have been many such special moments for Harris. At the same time, he took nothing for granted, notably security. He was part of trades that involved both Jason Kidd and Deron Williams, an old rival from Illinois.

Would Harris change anything if he had the chance? “Of course, I think everybody would do things differently, but I’ve enjoyed the journey regardless of the mistakes that I’ve made,” he said. “Everyone takes certain routes and if they would go back, maybe they’d go right instead of left. It’s just the nature of it. But for the most part have I stayed relevant? Absolutely.”

In late May, Harris was a member of Wauwatosa East’s inaugural Hall of Fame induction class. Among others, he joined Tony Smith, a Marquette alum and 9-year NBA vet. Harris always wore No.



HARRIS ON HIS HALL OF FAME INDUCTION:

**IT'S SPECIAL; IT RECOGNIZES WHAT YOU DID.
AND IT MEANS YOU DID IT THE RIGHT WAY.**

34 (when available) to honor his mentor, Smith, who graduated from 'Tosa East in 1986. Both Smith and Harris, who wore No. 20 as a prep, had their numbers retired by the school.

George Haas, who coached both Smith and Harris, was also inducted into the Hall of Fame. During his 14 seasons as Wauwatosa East's varsity coach, Haas collected 12 conference titles.

"He (Haas) was instrumental in my development," Harris said. "I got better each and every year. But more importantly, he challenged me every year. He always presented me with different challenges and even to this day, he will still challenge me with certain stuff."


In a sense, Harris was "home-schooled" in basketball. His dad, Terry Harris, had a huge influence. Not only did he preach the fundamentals, such as the valued use of both hands, he introduced his son to film study once he reached his teens. Devin's older brother, Bruce, was equally important from a competitive standpoint by drawing the most out of him. It all paid off.

"For anybody who goes to college, it's supposed to be the best four years of your life," Devin Harris reasoned. "I tried to squeeze the most out of it in three years. Learning how to deal with different types of people and the structure and learning how to multi-task with school and basketball prepared me for later in life."

Of course, nobody was prepared for back-to-back Final Fours.

"That was unheard of for us," Harris said. "A big part of the success was Frank staying for his senior year and coming back with the guys who had been together for awhile. They learned how to win together and they did it at a high level — a lot more than what we did when I was there. I was just proud to be a guy from Wisconsin watching them beat teams no one expected them to beat."

And he's definitely proud about going into the Wisconsin Athletics Hall of Fame.

"It's special; it recognizes what you did," he said. "And it means you did it the right way." 





JIM
LEONHARD

During his coaching tenure, Barry Alvarez liked to break up the offseason routine by staging a slam dunk contest among his football players. The favorites all looked the part, too, in 2002. There was a lanky 6-4 Texan, Jonathan Welsh, a defensive end; a sleek 6-3 Detroiter, Jonathan Orr, a wide receiver; and a rangy 6-4 New Yorker, Erasmus James, another defensive end.

With their size and high school backgrounds in basketball, they were expected to dominate the competition which included a wild card; a freshman defensive back, a walk-on, no less, from Tony; a tiny Wisconsin community (population: 114) between Glen Flora and Ladysmith, northeast of Eau Claire, some 230 miles from the Madison campus.

Jim Leonhard was the pride of Tony and Flambeau High School.

He was also 5-foot-8 and 174 pounds.

"I hadn't played basketball with many guys, so

they really didn't know much about me," recalled Leonhard, whose dad, Don, was his prep basketball coach. Although he was a prolific 3-pointer shooter — once drilling 10 triples in one half — he had hops, Jumpin' Jimmy. "There were a handful of guys who knew and the only reason I got into the competition was because I was pushed."

Leonhard beat Welsh in the slam-dunk finals.

"It definitely opened some eyes," he said.

To this day, 13 years later, though, it's understandable why his athleticism was underestimated.

"Absolutely, no question," he said, agreeing with those who had their doubts. "You should be (doubtful); at least, you'd be a little skeptical. That's why I took a lot of pride in how athletic I was when you wouldn't have necessarily thought that (by merely looking at him).

"Obviously when you're undersized," he continued, "there are certain things that you have to do





and certain situations that you have to stay away from. Maybe you have to do things a little bit different than some other people.

“For me, it was just learning the game and learning about you and what you can do. That’s the fun part; the mental side. It was fun figuring out, ‘How am I going to be successful?’ But whatever path it takes, you’re going to figure out a way. I never felt size was going to be a problem.”

Pity those who did.

“It was a big chip on my shoulder early in my career,” he said. “But once I felt like I established my-

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THAT’S THE FUN PART; THE MENTAL SIDE. IT WAS FUN FIGURING OUT, ‘HOW AM I GOING TO BE SUCCESSFUL?’ BUT WHATEVER PATH IT TAKES, YOU’RE GOING TO FIGURE OUT A WAY.

self, it wasn’t enough. That wasn’t what was making me go out there and work. I had to find other ways to motivate myself and I was able to find that motivation year-in and year-out.”

Many took note of his exceptional playmaking ability in spite of any perceived shortcomings. That included ex-Minnesota coach Glen Mason, now a Big Ten Network analyst. At the 2004 conference kickoff Luncheon in Chicago, Mason had a memorable encounter with Leonhard.

“I’m riding up the escalator with Jim Leonhard and (former UW tailback) Anthony Davis — he’s not very big either and he’s a good player,” Mason related at the time. “I looked at Leonhard and said, ‘You’re really Jim Leonhard? God, I’ve got managers bigger than you.’ And he kind of laughed.”

Mason then told Leonhard, “I’ll tell you one thing, son, you’re a football player.”

Later, Mason elaborated, “Football is a game of respect and I respect the heck out of that kid. He’s a winner. I’d like to have him on my team but I don’t like to compete against him.”

Leonhard opened a lot of eyes during a decorated career with the Badgers. He opened more as an undrafted free agent during his 10-year run in the National Football League with five different teams, so much so that induction into the Wisconsin Hall of Fame seemed inevitable, a slam-dunk.

But when he got the phone call from Alvarez notifying him of his induction, Leonhard was almost speechless. “Obviously you really don’t know what to say; I’m humbled by it all,” he said. “I’m just really excited to represent the university now in another way. It means a lot to me and my family.”

Had the thought — Hall of Famer — ever crossed his mind when he began his journey in northern Wisconsin? “Naaw, not even close,” he said. “Until you get the phone call, you don’t even think about it and then it’s pretty mind-blowing. I’m so indebted to this university; I’m a Badger for life.”



Coming out of high school, Jim Leonhard almost became a Bulldog, not a Badger. He was seriously considering going to Minnesota Duluth because the Division II program (in all sports but hockey) offered him an opportunity to play football and baseball, a Leonhard passion.

His dad was also his baseball coach and Leonhard excelled as a hitter and pitcher.

Among his legendary prep exploits, he once struck out 19 of 21 batters in a game.

Duluth was a solid option. But he couldn't turn his back on playing football at Wisconsin, especially because of the success of such walk-ons as Joe Panos, Chad Cascadden, Mark Tauscher, Donnel Thompson and Jason Doering, all of whom became starters and went on to the NFL.

After running a 4.4 in the 40 at the UW summer camp, Leonhard was recruited as a preferred walk-on. "When you're young, you just want to play," he said of his early goals. "I was a walk-on but I felt that I was good enough to compete at this level and help the team. That was really the mindset."

Leonhard contributed primarily on special teams

and lettered as a true freshman.

"He's not the biggest guy in the world but he really understands the game," said Kevin Cosgrove, then the UW defensive coordinator. "He's a very good athlete; he's deceiving, that's what he is, because he's put together pretty good and has a tremendous burst, quick feet and change of direction."

The spring following his freshman year was the turning point, Leonhard pointed out.

"Being a three sport kid (in high school), you never get that much time to focus year-round on one sport," he said. "That was the first time. I had gone through a season and had a little success and played. And, now, all of a sudden, you're going through winter conditioning and your body changes.

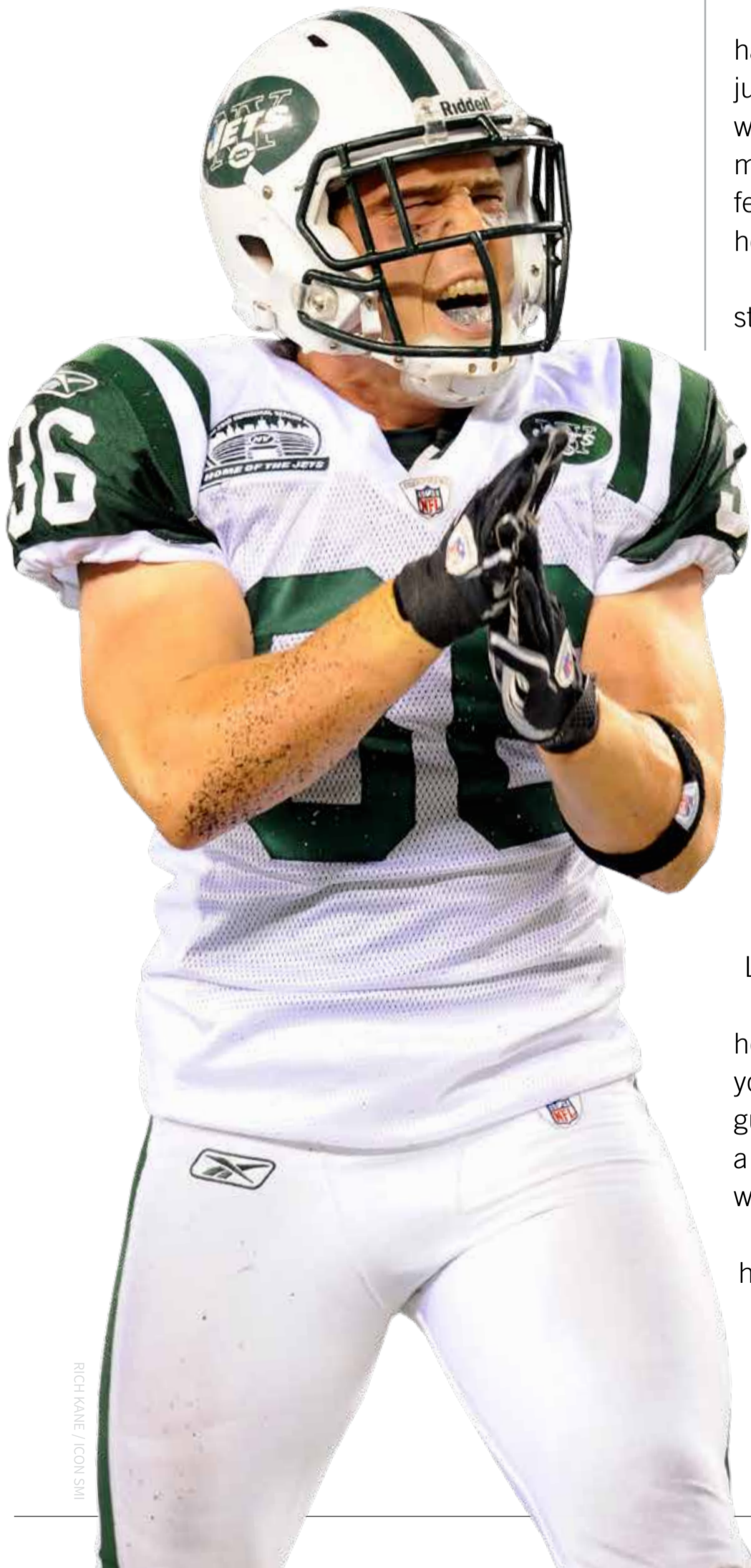
"You feel yourself growing and getting stronger. Jumping right back into football in the spring, you're in a totally different place mentally and physically. For me, it was kind of when I realized that I was going to make it. I never thought I would have the year that I did. But I knew that I was going to have a chance to be a significant piece to the puzzle."

From walk-on to All-American.

They put up a billboard in Tony documenting

“You play one play in that league and you’re fulfilling a dream of millions of millions of people.

To be doing it 10 years later, it’s pretty special and it meant a lot to me to get to this point.”



RICH KANE / ICON SMII

that accomplishment.

Leonhard went from freshman unknown to team MVP as a sophomore in 2002. Along the way, he led the nation with 11 interceptions, a single-season school record. He also broke the UW mark for punt return yardage. In addition, he was recognized as a first-team All-American by CNN/SI.com.

But it wasn’t until after his second year as a starter that the NFL popped on his radar.

“My sophomore year, you’re just so young and it happens so fast,” he said. “To go back out there as a junior and do it again that kind of validated the hard work that I had put in. That was when it first opened my mind (to the potential of a pro football career). I felt like, ‘Give me another year and I can figure out how to get to that next level.’”

And once he got there, he had to figure out how to stay there.

When asked about his survival instincts, Leonhard said, “I was always willing to learn, I was always willing to adapt. Situations change. I had a couple of defensive coordinators and three position coaches (at the UW). You’re dealing with different personalities and you have to learn how to think on your feet. It’s not the easiest way to do it, but it helped me out (in the pros).”

To this end, as an NFL player, Leonhard said, “You have to learn how to navigate the locker room and how to deal with coaches and their different systems. I got into a very good situation with a lot of veterans that taught me how to be a pro and how to make it essentially. Not a lot of guys get that.”

Leonhard listed Troy Vincent, Lawyer Milloy and London Fletcher among his mentors.

“You see how they work day-in and day-out and how they grind throughout the season,” he said. “If you open your eyes and pay attention to what those guys do, you can figure out the right way. There are a lot of guys in the league who are doing it the wrong way.”

Alvarez, at a different level, was also influential in his development, on and off the field.

“He coached football but he taught life through it,” he said. “He taught you how to be successful and the right way to go about your business in the day-to-day and that means so much more than what you actually learn on the football field.”

To survive a decade in the NFL speaks volumes to Leonhard's work ethic, study habits and skills.

"I never would have dreamed that would have happened," he conceded of his longevity (142 games; 73 starts). "You play one play in that league and you're fulfilling a dream of millions of millions of people. To be doing it 10 years later, it's pretty special and it meant a lot to me to get to this point. But now I'm ready to that next chapter and figure out what I want to do."

Leonhard, 32, announced his retirement at the end of 2014 season in Cleveland.

How will he adjust and cope this fall without putting on a helmet and pads?

"It will be definitely tough," he said. "As of this point, I feel good about it."


It almost sounded like he left the door ajar for a return.

"It was more mentally than physically," he said of his decision to retire. "Physically, I feel as good as I have the last three years; the best since high school, to be honest. I learned my body more and I figured out how to put myself back together.

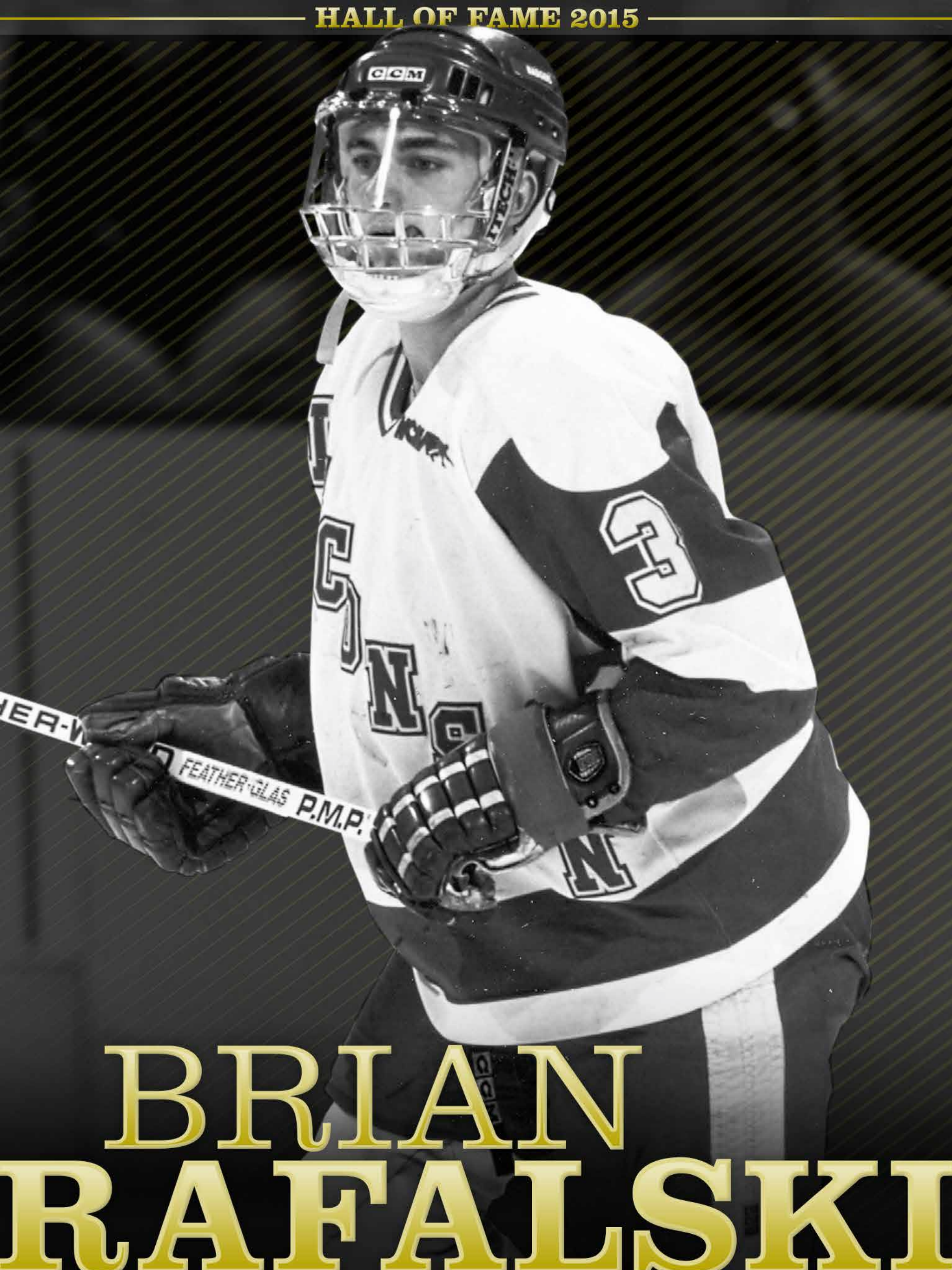
"I've had some big injuries and I would say one of my biggest flaws — which was also a strength — was being able to learn how to play through pain and play well when you're not feeling. (At the UW, he fielded punts in a bowl game even though he had wrist fractures).

"I really figured out my body the last couple of years and I've been as productive as ever. But I put so much into the game mentally — as much as I do physically — and I have so much respect for this game that I don't want to do it any other way. I don't want to go half-way."

For now, Jim and his wife Katie — they met on campus as undergrads — will expend all of their energy on their two young boys. Does coaching hold any interest for Leonhard? After all, he was raised by a family of coaches; dad, mom, grandfather, aunts, uncles.

"I definitely have an attraction to coaching," said Leonhard who was the consummate "coach on the field" during his playing days. "I know I would love it. But I'm just trying to figure out if that's the right path. There's such a huge time commitment. I have to make sure it's right and I'm going to take a little time to do that." 





BRIAN
RAFALSKI



Brian Rafalski's message fulfilled a hat trick: sound, strong and straightforward.

Cautioning his hockey players at practice, he said, "We're not just doing a drill to learn a skill."

It was so much more and Rafalski wanted to make them think about what they were doing.

"We're also doing it," he explained, "to put you in game situations."

Rafalski then challenged the group with the use of hypotheticals.

"Why are we doing this?" he posed. "Why are we working on this type of turn or this type of pass? And where can we use this in a game — not just practice it — but apply it in a game?"

Rafalski was not playing games, mind games, with his players — 10 and 11-year-olds in Florida. On the contrary, he was just teaching hockey the only way he knows how — the way he was taught. "Every day I went to the rink," he said, "I worked hard and tried to get better."

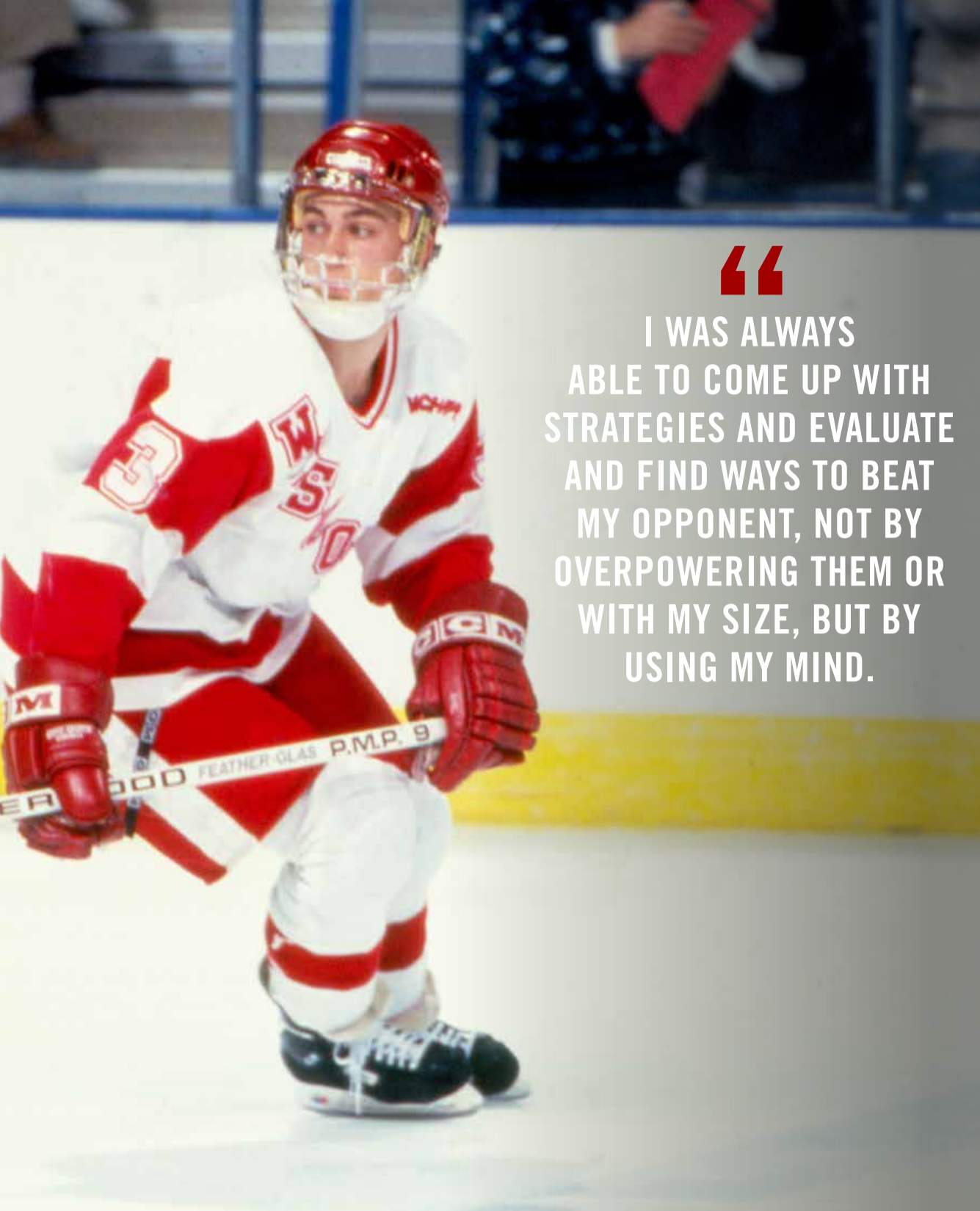
Four years ago, Rafalski moved the family to the Fort Meyers area, not exactly known for its hockey

pedigree. Along with his wife Felicity, a Deforest native, Rafalski will escape to Wisconsin in the summer — they've had a place in Waupaca for 12 years — while "wintering" in Florida.

Seeking to stay competitively engaged with the sport, coaching was the best option, so Brian Rafalski began assisting with youth teams: the Florida Alliance AAA U-10 Major Elite Squirts and the AA Squirts for the Junior Everblades Hockey Association. His son Matthew plays on both teams.

As one of the co-coaches, Rafalski proudly noted that the Elite Squirts were ranked No. 1 in the nation this past season. "It's an age group that is exceptionally blessed with a lot of good players," he said. "They played at a high level and beat a lot of teams from Toronto, Detroit and Chicago."

One of Rafalski's teaching points revolves around "listening and paying attention." These are qualities not always found in abundance with this age group. "As they get older, they get better," he laughed. "But it's about bearing down and being mentally strong with what happens during a game."



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That would entail handling the swings in momentum, dealing with the good and the bad, one of the many lessons that he teaches. In turn, he has been rewarded by the results. “It’s good to see them grow,” he said, “and learn the game and play it properly.”

The kids definitely have the ideal teacher in the 42-year-old Rafalski who skated on three Stanley Cup champions (two with New Jersey and one with Detroit) and three Olympic teams (twice winning silver). What they have is a Hall of Famer willing to share his experiences and wisdom.

Last year, Rafalski went into the United States Hockey Hall of Fame along with his former Badger coach Jeff Sauer. This year, he’s a member of the Wisconsin Athletics Hall of Fame class along with defensive back Jim Leonhard. Both were undersized overachievers who enjoyed professional success.

“Not being as big of a player, I had to use my skating and I had to be smarter,” said Rafalski, a first-team All-American in 1995. “I was always able to come up with strategies and evaluate and find ways to beat my opponent, not by overpowering them or with my size, but by using my mind.”

The 5-10 Rafalski, like the 5-8 Leonhard, played big. In 833 career regular-season NHL games, spanning 11 seasons, he accounted for 515 points, including 79 goals. In 165 Stanley Cup playoff games (he played in five finals) he had 29 goals and 100 points. He was not only smart but extremely skilled.

Resilient would be another word that would apply to Rafalski, who was born in Dearborn, Michigan, and raised in Allen Park. When he was 17, he made the commitment to relocate and play for the Madison Capitols, a junior team in the United States Hockey League. He wound up getting his high school degree from Madison East.

In 1991, Rafalski was named to the USHL All-Star team. The following season, he was skating a regular shift on defense for the Badgers. “It was a good opportunity to come in right away and start playing,” he remembered. But there were growing pains.

As a sophomore, he didn’t score a goal in 32 games. But he was still valued as an “honest” defenseman by the staff. Rafalski took to heart a message that was posted on a sign hanging over the entrance to the locker room: “Anyone can be great sometimes. The hardest thing is to be consistent.”

As a senior, he accounted for 45 points — 11 goals, 34 assists — in 43 games. At the time, he pointed out, “I don’t like to play on emotion. For me, personally, I think it affects my play too much. Even if I make a mistake, I just keep playing the same — at the same consistent level every shift.”

Rafalski grew in confidence and strength each year with the Badgers. By the end of his college hockey career, he could bench press over 300 pounds. Still, he had gone undrafted and it was rather obvious that the pro scouts were skeptical about his size and durability.

Upon graduation, he took a job with Philip Morris; he sold cigarettes to convenience stores.

“I wanted to stick with hockey,” he told *The Sporting News*, “but I had to be ready with something else and Philip Morris made me a pretty good offer. I didn’t go around telling anybody that cigarettes were good for them. I just tried to convince stores that it was OK for them to have them on their shelves.”

Rafalski spent six months as a summer intern before returning to hockey. In 1995, he signed with a Swedish team (Brynäs Gavie). That was a refresher course. For the next three seasons, he played 142 games in Finland, making a name for himself with HIFK Helsinki. He was the talk of Europe.

The *Sporting News* labeled him as “the best hock-

ey player in the world not playing in the NHL.”

Reflecting on his apprenticeship, he said, “I never looked too far ahead. I looked at it one year at a time. I worked on my offensive ability — shooting and skating — and got more confident. Skating is my game; I need to be good at that play in the NHL. I wasn’t going to be a defensive defenseman at 5-10.”

Patience was the key.

“It was my goal (to play in the NHL) but you can’t force it, you have to do what you can do,” he said. “I went to Europe for four years and I was very content. I was playing good hockey and providing for my family. I was able to expand my game and it led me to where I was supposed to be.”

The path led to New Jersey. With the Devils, he was partnered on the blue line with Scott Stevens. Rafalski never stopped developing, either. “I was fortunate enough to be coached by a Hall of Fame defenseman in Larry Robinson,” he said. “You’re always learning and trying to grow.”

Stevens was a teammate and a mentor. There were



others. Rafalski learned from Slava Fetisov, Ken Daneyko and Scott Niedermayer. When he signed with Detroit as a free agent in 2007, he was paired with Nicklas Lidstrom; a dynamic tandem. And Rafalski's contributions didn't go unnoticed.


"He was an even better player when I got to watch him every day," Detroit general manager Ken Holland told NHL.com. "I'm not sure we win the Stanley Cup (in 2008) without him. He meant that much to our team paired with Nick (Lidstrom).

"His ability to spin, go back under pressure, get the puck, swing the net and make that first pass to transition the team from defense to offense meant we rarely spent a lot of time in our zone. I think he was a quiet player but respected by management, coaches and his teammates."

Rafalski never felt like he played with a chip on his shoulder — "Absolutely not, God was going to put me exactly where I was supposed to be" — even though he was forced to prove himself at various stages of his career. "In the end," he said, "people gave me an opportunity and I took advantage."

Injuries caught up with Rafalski, who retired in 2011. Three years later, he got the hunger to play again and signed with the Florida Everblades of the East Coast Hockey League. The Everblades were coached by former UW defenseman Greg Poss, who had preceded Rafalski with the Badgers.

But his comeback was short-lived. Rafalski, then 40, appeared in three games before his back acted up, forcing him to hang up his skates for good. "I really don't miss it," said Rafalski, who continues to serve the ECHL team as a chaplain. "This is another stage of my life; I'm being a coach. It's the next step and I've moved on to the next thing."

Which is mentoring youngsters on hockey fundamentals. Just like he was brought up. 



HE WAS AN EVEN BETTER PLAYER WHEN I GOT TO WATCH HIM EVERY DAY. I THINK HE WAS A QUIET PLAYER BUT REPECTED BY MANAGEMENT, COACHES AND HIS TEAMMATES.

— KEN HOLLAND ON RAFALSKI —





KERRY WELLAND

The first time that Kerry Weiland can remember being called a “pioneer” was during her high school days in Palmer, Alaska when she was skating on the boy’s team. Weiland was raised on a 235-acre farm just outside of Anchorage and more than held her own on the ice.

“We had four or five practices a week and a couple of games on the weekend,” she said. “I was actually voted on the All-Region team. That was probably my first inkling of being a pioneer — sort of setting the stage that girls can play hockey and achieve things that no one had ever done before.”

She was the first female to earn first-team recognition in Alaska prep history.

“Women’s hockey has had a lot of pioneers, that’s for sure,” she said.

And she has always been “honored” to be considered among them.

Continuing on that trailblazing path at Wisconsin, there were many more “firsts.”

Weiland was a member of the first recruiting class after the school elevated women’s hockey from club status to a varsity sport. She went on to be named the program’s first All-American. And now she has become the first women’s hockey player to go into the Wisconsin Athletics Hall of Fame.

“Having (UW athletic director) Barry Alvarez say, ‘You’re in the Hall of Fame’ literally brought tears to my eyes,” she said. “My initial reaction I would say was shock. I’m definitely so honored to be recognized by such an outstanding university. Yeah, I was shocked and absolutely honored.”

You can better understand her reaction by knowing a little something about her mindset.

On playing at Wisconsin, she said, “It was a dream come true to have a scholarship and get a first-class education. That was my full focus. I wanted to grab a degree or two and also play on an inaugural team that kind of set the bar for women’s hockey. I never thought of the Hall of Fame.”

At that, Weiland didn’t know what to think when she first got a UW recruiting packet in the mail.

“I really had never heard of it,” she admitted. “But I knew of Sasner.”

Julie Sasner was hired from Cornell to build a program at Wisconsin. Weiland’s connection? Sasner, a four-time All-Ivy selection as a player at Harvard, had worked some hockey camps in Alaska. “I thought she was still at Cornell,” said Weiland, who viewed her as an “old school coach.”

Sasner’s first recruit was goaltender Jackie MacMillan, also a pioneer. She had been on Sasner’s



radar at Cornell. MacMillan's freshmen teammates in that first UW class included Weiland, Sis Paulsen, Kelly Kegley and Chanda Gunn. They were joined by transfers Michelle Sikich and Roberta Shufeldt.

Weiland had her choice of schools. Minnesota and New Hampshire were at the top of her list before she visited Madison. "I remember thinking, 'This is where I want to spend four to five years of my life. How can anything beat this,'" she recalled.

"It was the place for me. It just felt like home."

It didn't hurt that Weiland had a "good rapport" with Sasner.

"But I really don't remember her having to convince me, she didn't necessarily have to pitch it (UW)," she said, adding that Sasner told her, "We're going to have a hockey program and we're going to do it first class and you're going to get a first-class education, too. Do you want to join us?"

Without hesitating, Weiland replied, "Oh, yeah, let's do it."

So they did ... they did it together ... all of the freshmen ... with the inevitable growing pains.

"Because it was a new program," Weiland said, "we didn't have any veterans so there was no one to ask how to get around campus. Jackie MacMillan (who had enrolled in the fall of 1998) had been there for a year so we could lean on her a little bit. But that was only one person.

"All of us freshmen were trying to find our way. Yet you have the load and the weight and the pressure of the program on your shoulders being scholarship athletes. We definitely had more on our shoulders than most incoming fresh-

men in established programs. That was the biggest challenge."

Not everyone on campus was sold on the addition of a women's hockey program.



I REMEMBER SOMEONE ASKING (DURING HER RECRUITMENT), 'WHY MADISON?' IT'S BECAUSE THE CITY HAS THIS ENERGY THAT RADIATES THROUGH IT — THAT UNIVERSITY, COLLEGE TOWN FEEL. I'M HONORED TO STILL CALL MYSELF A BADGER."

"There was definitely some pushback from some of the men's hockey players," she noted. "I remember them saying, 'We're not that happy you are here because some of our buddies got cut because they had to lower the roster size.' That

was the only ruffling of feathers. And it was few and far between. Like with anything, when there's a big change, it hurt some feelings."

But everyone survived. "After that first year," she said, "no one questioned it."

Stability was lacking, though. After that first year — the Badgers posted a 19-14-2 record — Sasner

left Wisconsin to be an assistant coach on the U.S. women's national team. Trina Bourget was summarily promoted to head coach and guided the Badgers to a 21-9-5 mark.

In 2001, Bourget took a medical leave of absence halfway through the season and turned the team over to assistants Tracey Cornell and Dan Koch. The Badgers went 22-11-2 and Bourget wound up resigning. That opened the door to a bold and prudent hire: Mark Johnson took over the program.

Weiland was born in 1980 — the same year that Johnson starred in the Lake Placid Olympics.

"If I was going to say there was a turning point, it was that," she said of his hiring. "It gave us stability; it gave us a name in hockey, a men's coach. He just brought respect. We were seen more like hockey players



versus women's hockey players then. He brought a bit of credibility."

Weiland later acknowledged, "We welcomed him with open arms, too."

Not that her mindset changed from that freshman season. "We were just trying to have a winning record that first couple of years," she said. "We kind of wanted to be the foundation of the program. From the looks of it, and all the national championships, we did a pretty good job."

Johnson has won four NCAA titles with the Badgers.

Weiland embodied Johnson's work ethic.

"I never wanted to be outworked," she said.

As a freshman, she was named first-team All-WCHA. As a sophomore, Weiland led the nation's defensemen with 49 points (12 goals, 37 assists) in 35 games. As a junior, she was recognized as a first-team All-American, the first in school history. She finished her career with 124 points, sixth-most ever.

After graduating from Wisconsin with degrees in legal studies and sociology, Weiland stayed active as a player. She was a four-time member of the U.S. national team and came home with a gold and silver medal from the International Ice Hockey Federation World Championships.

Weiland now makes her home in Toronto.

"I sometimes still have dreams about playing at a high level — wearing whatever jersey whether it be red, white and blue or red and white," she said. "I got cut in 2006 for the Olympics and I remember thinking, 'Boy does that burn to have someone else decide when your career is over.'"

She felt slighted and energized — to make the 2010 team. So she went to Europe and played and when there was an overhaul on the national team coaching staff, she came out of retirement. "Quote unquote," Weiland said for effect. She had never really considered herself retired.

"I thought, 'What's the worst case scenario? Are they going to cut me again? I've already been through it,'" she said. "I wanted to walk away when it was my decision and not someone else's decision or my body's decision in terms of injury."


True to her words, she earned a spot on the 2010 Olympic team and then retired on her terms. "I had played at many levels and it was my first love," she said of hockey. "A big part of having that peace of



mind and contentment was that I decided when it was time for me to be done."

Since then, she has been involved with some coaching and instruction. "Yes, I love to skate and I love to play hockey," she reaffirmed. "But I don't have the feeling that I have to play at that level again."

Many of Weiland's former UW teammates have reached out to her since word got out that she was going into the Hall of Fame. She was in Madison for the opening of LaBahn Arena. And she can't wait to get back in early September for the induction ceremonies.

"I love the city," she said. "I remember someone asking (during her recruitment), 'Why Madison?' It's because the city has this energy that radiates through it — that university, college town feel. I'm honored to still call myself a Badger." And she doesn't mind being called a pioneer, either. 



PAULA
BONNER



In 2011, the Wisconsin Alumni Association marked a yearlong celebration of its 150th anniversary, which culminated with the gift of Alumni Park, to be complete in 2017, along with Goodspeed Family Pier at Alumni Park and the future One Alumni Place. As the association's president, Bonner is leading the team to realize this vision for a transformed lakeshore that welcomes alumni, and celebrates their impact and legacy.

If it takes a Hall of Famer to know a Hall of Famer then Sue Ela, Class of 2011, is in good company with Paula Bonner, Class of 2015. And if it takes a former coach to shine a light on the accomplishments of a former administrator then Ela, the former women's rowing coach, is the right person to speak on the influence of Bonner, the former women's associate athletic director.

"She's got Badger blood flowing through her veins," Ela said.

That's cutting to the chase. But there's so much more to know about Bonner, the president and CEO of the Wisconsin Alumni Association. For starters, there's the impact that she had on the growth of women's athletics at Wisconsin, dating back to the mid-'70s when Bonner formed a tag-team with Dr. Kit Saunders-Nordeen, another Hall of Famer and the school's first athletic director for women.

"Kit and Paula," Ela said, "basically built the women's athletic department. I have to say as a coach in the early years that they both had our back." They

were advocates? "Oh, man, absolutely," she went on. "The early years were rather difficult for the women's coaches. In a way, Kit and Paula did the hard work. We had the fun stuff where we got to build the teams and work with the kids."

Ela agreed that Saunders-Nordeen and Bonner didn't get enough credit as visionaries, especially after the enactment of Title IX in 1972. "They did what they had to do," said Ela, one of the founding members of the women's rowing club, a champion rower after it became a varsity sport, and a coach for nearly two decades. "Beyond that, certainly, they were paving the way for those who came later."

Thinking back on those transitional years, Bonner said, "I was a young pup and Title IX was fresh and new. Like anything getting started, it was fun to be on the ground floor. We just had a great time. It was less formal and we had fun but we were serious about building women's athletic teams."

The climate today is much different than it was in the '70s when the women were attempting to es-



Bonner formed a tag-team with Dr. Kit Saunders-Nordeen (left), another Hall of Famer and the school's first athletic director for women.

establish their identity on what had been exclusively male turf. For historical perspective, the NCAA and Big Ten didn't even recognize women's athletics or sanction championship events until 1981-82.

"I'd say it was very positive on the campus from faculty and staff," Bonner said. "All in all, the men's athletic department melded in ... there were some episodes of anger and frustration between a men's coach and a women's at times trying to sort out shared facilities and practice times.

"We had an episode with the crew team, unbeknownst to me and Kit, where they walked into Elroy Hirsch's office and started disrobing in complaint of not having a locker room; something we had been working on. But their activities made that happen.

"There were just a lot of gracious and helpful people in the department. We had it pretty darn good. I felt Madison was one of the more progressive places I had ever lived. And when I got here, I thought I

had died and gone to heaven."

Bonner never strayed from her commitment to the student-athletes through thick or thin.

"She had their backs, too," Ela said. She also had a plan.

"Paula was always working hard to make sure we had what we needed to succeed and be number one," Ela said. "There were a lot of improvements during those years. There are times when you have to look back and realize the contributions that people like Paula made and continue to make."

Bonner's gregarious personality has always been one of her most disarming qualities.

Ela referenced, "That, y'all Southern drawl and that laugh and positive attitude." They're all distinguishing characteristics, especially her positivity, a valuable trait in athletics.

Reiterated Ela, "She just always genuinely had our backs. She was for us. She was for our team. She was for women. She was for Wisconsin. She was a real builder of success. I absolutely believe that she has been an ambassador for the University of Wisconsin wherever she has gone."



Head and assistant women's athletics coaches pose on the spirit squad fire truck at Camp Randall Stadium prior to the 1986 season.

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That Southern drawl is a remnant of Bonner's upbringing in the "Low Country" — she was raised in Moncks Corner, South Carolina, 20 miles from Charleston. Her dad was a principal, math teacher and the boys and girls basketball coach at small high school in Greeleyville.

"I never really think a lot about the south as being cutting edge," she said. "But, ironically, they started having the state girls basketball tournament in South Carolina as early as 1940."

After graduating from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro, Bonner came to Madison to work on her Master's in August of 1976. A year later, Saunders-Nordeen and Otto Breitenbach, the chief assistant to athletic director Elroy Hirsch, brought her aboard as a part-time administrative assistant. That rolled over to a full-time position and more exposure to Saunders-Nordeen's management style.

"Kit helped me meet people and know people and that helped me get wired in more quickly," said Bonner. "She had a great sense of sportsmanship and competitiveness which I admired from the beginning. She was feisty. But, at that point, I was younger and really feisty."

"She was good at times in not letting me get too far out of bounds during what was kind of a pioneering, activist period of time for women's athletics. And I loved that. Kit gave me a lot of freedom to do what I wanted to do to help make connections on campus and build support of women's athletics. If she saw me going a little bit too far, she'd rein me in. We had a good back-and-forth partnership."

In 1983, Saunders-Nordeen was named an associate athletic director for men's and women's sports, a position that she held through 1991. Bonner, in turn, became the over-

“

SHE JUST ALWAYS GENUINELY HAD OUR BACKS. SHE WAS FOR US. SHE WAS FOR OUR TEAM. SHE WAS FOR WOMEN. SHE WAS FOR WISCONSIN. SHE WAS A REAL BUILDER OF SUCCESS.

— SUE ELA ON BONNER —



Bonner is honored by former UW senior women's administrator Cheryl Marra at the 30th anniversary of UW Women's Athletics.



seer of the 11 women's sports teams at a stage, she observed, when they were equated with 11 men's non-income sports, an evolution of the Title IX interpretation.

Regarding the model, Bonner said, "I certainly had a big vision and dreams about what it should look like. I expected more parity for resources, for coach's salaries. And I thought there was really no limit to how much better women's athletics could become if they just had more opportunity to do so."

For context, Bonner said, "When I left the athletic department on June, 30, 1989, the budget for the whole department was \$14.2 million. I've watched it escalate over time (It was \$104.6 for 2014-2015) and seeing the growth in all of this is amazing. When you see the kind of support the women's teams have, it's great, and it's far beyond anything I would have imagined."

Bonner can look back proudly on her efforts in the area of marketing and promotion. Along with Barbara Wagner, she co-hosted a weekly Badger women's

sports show in a back room of the Brat and Brau on Regent Street. "That was just a blast," she said, "and it really helped get the word out more."

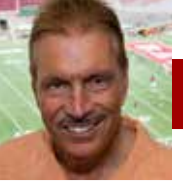
She's still getting the word out — to Wisconsin alumni everywhere.

"It's one of the best possible jobs a person can have," Bonner said. "The alumni that I have met all over the world are fantastic people doing great things. I love what a difference this place (the UW) makes in the world. I have felt it (her job) has fit me like a glove."

She has the best of two worlds; what she called the "two sides of the coin."

"I like working in some serious ways with the chancellor's office and with some deans internally on campus," she said. "I also love the aspect of being able to take a more fun-loving, cheerleader aspect of my personality and putting it out there to keep up spirits and motivate."

If you've ever been to a Badger pep rally, y'all have seen that side of her. 



Clement focused on just being himself

Junior running back comfortable stepping into the spotlight

Corey Clement is seeking some balance in his life, the life of a college football running back that is determined to prove that there is life after Melvin Gordon. Striking a balance between what he called “elusiveness and patience” has been on his mind all summer. It was put there by Gordon, whose advice has been fueling Clement’s desire to take all the right steps as his successor.

“As far as seeing the holes opening up,” Clement said, “I’ve been going over hole progressions and trying not to be so fast to the hole all the time. What I learned from Melvin is that every time he’s in the game, he’s always reminding himself to be one step slower to the hole because that actually works out better instead of beating your linemen to the spot where you’re supposed to be.”

Clement is more than willing to be “patient” and sacrifice some of his “elusiveness” to set up his blockers, a lesson that Gordon also had to learn through game repetitions. Patience was not always Gordon’s strong suit in the early stages of his record-setting career, either. Before leaving for training camp in San Diego, Gordon had some sage and valuable advice for Clement, a junior

TAP TO VIEW SCHEDULE

[Tweets by @BadgerFootball](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA:



SCROLL



Busy summer prepares Badgers for season

Three players competed on foreign tours; All-Americans lead team

It was a busy summer for the Badger volleyball team. Three members of the squad competed overseas as part of USA Volleyball or Big Ten Conference teams. The Badgers also announced their captains and TV schedule for the 2015 season.

GOLD MEDAL FOR GILLIS

Sophomore Lauryn Gillis represented Wisconsin as a member of the U.S. Junior National team, winning a gold medal at the Global Challenge in Pula, Croatia. Gillis, a 6-1 outside hitter, transferred to UW after one season at USC. She played in 21 matches, starting 17, and 69 sets as a freshman for the Women of Troy. She ranked third on the team with 2.14 kills per set, recording double-figure kills in five matches. She had a career-high 15 kills in three matches. Gillis added 1.86 digs per set, tallying double-figure digs in four matches.

Senior Taylor Morey traveled to China with the U.S. Collegiate National Team, playing six matches against Chinese collegiate all-star teams and Chinese club teams. Morey, a 5-5 libero, was named the 2014 Big Ten Defensive Player of the Year, leading the conference with 5.12 digs per set.

Sophomore Kelli Bates was the final Badger to compete over-

TAP TO VIEW SCHEDULE

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SOCIAL MEDIA:





DAVID STLUKA

Exciting fall awaits the Badgers in 2015

Men's soccer prepares for a loaded and exciting home schedule this season

This fall shapes up to be an action packed season for the Wisconsin men's soccer team.

Having lost just two seniors from last season, the Badgers return a solid core of experience and young talent for 2015.

Ten upperclassmen look to lead the charge both in example and on the field for Wisconsin. Drew Conner, Anders Kristensen, Adam Lauko and Carl Schneider make up the team's senior core.

Making an immediate impact last season for UW was the freshman trio of Tom Barlow, Mike Catalano and Mark Segbers. The three Badgers each earned Big Ten All-Freshman team honors in 2014 and look to take their games one step further in 2015.

Not only will the Badgers be tested, but soccer fans will be treated to a loaded home schedule that features five contests against teams that appeared in the NCAA tournament last season. No. 13 Maryland, No. 9 Michigan State, Northwestern, No. 23 Penn State and No. 19 Xavier will all visit the McClimon Soccer Complex.

The Maryland game in particular will be a special home event, as Big Ten Network will be in Madison to broadcast the game live on national television. There are also plans that weekend

TAP TO VIEW SCHEDULE

[Tweets by @BadgerMSoccer](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA:



SCROLL

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Back to square one: Preseason begins

Women's soccer reported for preseason last week, hosts exhibition Thursday

It's back to square one for the Badgers.

After winning a program-record 19 games and a Big Ten tournament title last season, the Wisconsin women's soccer team reported to preseason camp last week and is already well underway with lifts, practices and film sessions.

It's a time to get back to the basics, hone in on the technical and grow together as a new team for a new season.

Returning for Wisconsin is NSCAA second-team All-American Rose Lavelle, along with All-Big Ten honorees Kinley McNicoll and Brianna Stelzer. Lavelle was recently named to the 2015 MAC Hermann Trophy Watch List, an award that stands as the most prestigious individual award in college soccer.

Looking to replace the likes of Big Ten Goalkeeper of the Year Genevieve Richard and All-Big Ten forward Cara Walls from last year's graduating class, there are 10 new Badgers joining the team in 2015.

Wisconsin begins the 2015 season ranked No. 14 in the country by the National Soccer Coaches Association of America (NSCAA) in its preseason poll. The Badgers are one of three Big Ten teams garnering national preseason rankings, behind only Penn State

TAP TO VIEW SCHEDULE

[Tweets by @BadgerWSoccer](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA:





‘Cardinal,’ White & Blue: Badgers rep USA

Whitney Hite, Ivy Martin and Michael Weiss part of 2015 World Championships

The Red, White and Blue had a hint of Cardinal in it this past week.

Three Badgers were representing not only the United States, but also the University of Wisconsin on one of the largest stages in the world of swimming. Second only to the Olympics, the 2015 FINA World Championships were held this past week in Kazan, Russia.

There with USA Swimming was current Wisconsin head coach Whitney Hite, as well as former Badgers Ivy Martin and Michael Weiss.

Hite was one of three selected to serve on the U.S. men’s coaching staff as an assistant coach.

“It’s something that you dream about being a part of,” Hite said. “I think it is a great honor and I am proud to help the United States go over and swim as fast as we can and compete at the highest level. There’s a tradition in the world of USA Swimming and it’s an honor to be a part of that elite team. I’m honored to be part of a staff that’s a who’s who in the coaching world.”

Weiss competed for the USA in the 800-meter freestyle relay. The Reno, Nevada, native shined early in preliminaries of the

[TAP TO VIEW SCHEDULE](#)

[Tweets by @BadgerSwimDive](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA:



SCROLL



ICON SPORTSMIRE

Jorgensen punches ticket to Rio 2016

Former UW runner will compete in her second Olympics next summer

After a flat tire derailed her chances of a podium finish at the 2012 Summer Olympics, former UW standout Gwen Jorgensen's main goal has been to return to the Olympic stage.

Jorgensen accomplished that goal earlier this month as she punched her ticket to the 2016 Summer Olympics after winning the 2015 International Triathlon Union World Olympic Qualification Event in Rio de Janeiro.

The reigning world champion, Jorgensen finished the 1500-meter swim, 40-kilometer bike ride and 10,000-meter run in 1 hour, 58 minutes, 46 seconds to win her 13th-straight triathlon.

Jorgensen was among the lead pack of 20 after the ocean swim and bike portion of the competition. During the run, the lead pack shrunk to four competitors, with Jorgensen in the lead.

After the third lap, Jorgensen separated from the pack and ran the 10,000 meters in 33:57, the best time of the day, to win the Olympic qualifying event.

"I've been working toward this for a while, since the London Olympics," Jorgensen said. "I'm excited to be able to come back [to Rio] next year."

TAP TO VIEW SCHEDULE

[Tweets by @Badger_Track](#)

SOCIAL MEDIA:





Nine Badgers off to national camps

UW players gain valuable experience at U.S. and Canada national events

While many students are spending their last month of summer relaxing, nine Wisconsin women's hockey players are hitting the ice at their respective national team camps in August.

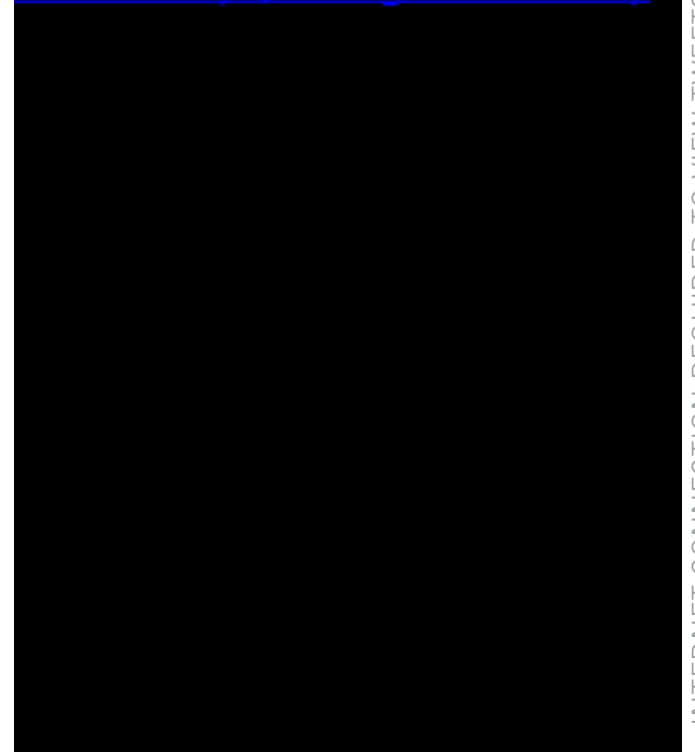
Canadians Mellissa Channell, Emily Clark, Sam Cogan, Ann-Renée Desbiens, Sydney McKibbon and Sarah Nurse are currently at the Canadian National Women's Development Team Selection Camp in Calgary, Alberta. The Canadian National Women's Development Team features players that are playing collegiate hockey in the United States and Canada that are under the age of 22.

"I'm expecting to gain a lot of experience as the camp is filled with a lot of skilled and talented players from all over Canada," said McKibbon, who will serve as an assistant captain for UW next year. "It is nice to have so many familiar faces here because it releases a little bit of the pressure when you have people here who you play with all the time back in Wisconsin."

In addition to the six Canadians that are busy training in Calgary, three current Badgers are at the 2015 USA Hockey Women's National Festival in Lake Placid, New York. Senior captain

TAP TO VIEW SCHEDULE

[Tweets by @BadgerWHockey](#)



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